■ WORLD/A12

Thaksin resignation only way to resolve Thai political crisis, says police general

■ 2bU!/C1

Valentine promo winners announced after sorting through 2,000 entries

■ BUSINESS/B1

February inflation highest in 8 months; new VAT rate jacks up prices of goods

■ SPORTS/A23

New world champion Barrera seeks rematch with Pacquiao

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, March 8, 2006 ★★★ 5 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 90 P18 website: www.inq7.net

QC court frees suspected smuggler: Cops in uproar

By Luige A. del Puerto
and Leila B. Salaverria

POLICE INVESTIGATORS WERE IN AN UPROAR after the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office yesterday recommended the release of suspected smuggler Samuel Lee whom the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) had charged with bribery.

CIDG investigators said the ruling was "highly

QC COURT/A20

US tells RP: Watch NGOs, casinos for 'dirty money'

By Volt Contreras

A US DEPARTMENT OF STATE REPORT HAS urged the Philippine government to place non-government organizations and casinos nationwide under closer scrutiny as potential "dirty money" conduits for terrorism and organized crime.

In general, the 2006 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) lauded the

US TELLS/A20

'It's God's plan I'm here'

GMA to use emergency powers again if needed

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

FOR A FULL HALF HOUR, SHE WAS ON THE OFfensive, blasting her opponents for seeking headlines, for excessive politicking at the expense of the poor, and even for eating while holding their congressional deliberations.

And she denied she was the root cause of the divisions renting the country. In fact, she said, she believed her being President was part of God's plan for her—and for the country.

She said she was also aware of the calls for her to resign.

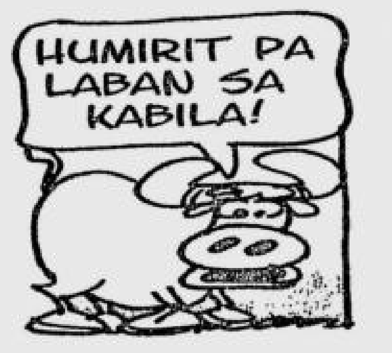
"But I have great faith in God's will. I believe that I am here now because that is the plan of God for me and for us. As long as I am here, I will do my best to do what is best for our country."

"Who is lambasting me? Who is always calling for my ouster? Who is politicking? Who is making personal attacks? I myself have been ignoring all their attacks against me," President Macapagal-Arroyo said on radio dzBB, the first media interview she gave after her controversial emergency proclamation.

She sounded buoyed by what she termed as the successful implementation of Proclamation No. 1017, which she imposed on Feb. 24 and lifted a week later.

At one point, Ms Arroyo ad-

IT'S GOD'S/A8



Journalism 101, according to GMA

By Christine O. Avendaño

IT WAS AN EXERCISE TO SHOW how media should report the news under a politically battered administration.

President Macapagal-Arroyo made it clear when she went to GMA 7 yesterday that she agreed to be interviewed by the network because, in her words, it practiced the kind of reporting she wanted: "Responsible journalism."

Ms Arroyo said the network prac-

JOURNALISM/A8

LYN RILLON

HERSTORY: On Tuesday, the eve of International Women's Day, President Arroyo hosts a celebration at the Palace for women leaders from all over the country. For the sisterhood, Ms Arroyo and guests flash the "W" sign. Ironically, a bigger coalition of women is scheduled to take to the streets today at the Central Business District in Makati City to demand the ouster of their sister, who happens to be the country's highest official.

Peso breaks 51 to $1 barrier, hits 3 1/2-year high

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO BROKE INTO THE 50 to the dollar level for the first time in over three years on the influx of "hot money" from portfolio investors and remittances from overseas Filipino workers for their children's graduation.

The peso hit the key psychological barrier of 51 right after the foreign exchange market's opening and set a 3-1/2-year high of 50.88 to the dollar.

But the peso gave up its gains in late afternoon trading to close at 51.06, a centavo lower than Monday's finish of 51.05 against the greenback.

Currency traders said the peso would have closed nearer yesterday's high had the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) not intervened at the Philippine Dealing System, the foreign exchange market.

"The BSP easily bought at least $150 million through foreign banks to stem the peso's sharp rise against the dollar," a currency trader said.

Other currency traders said the market's momentum continued to favor the peso given the easing of political tensions and improving economic fundamentals.

"But the BSP found an opportunity to further build up its foreign reserves while trying to smoothen market fluctuations,"

PESO/A9

In Calauit, Erap, Luli, Jinggoy are playmates

By Blanche S. Rivera

CALAUIT ISLAND, PALAWAN—At least in these idyllic surroundings, Erap, Jinggoy and Luli are not biting each other's head off.

The three giraffes named after Malacañang denizens—ousted President Joseph Estrada, his eldest son and President Macapagal-Arroyo's only daughter, respectively—live harmoniously with more than 1,000 other animals in this nature preserve put up by the Palace resident who stayed the longest, the strongman Ferdinand Marcos.

They are descendants of the first giraffes brought to the Philippines from Nairobi, Kenya, on March 4, 1977, only months after Marcos signed Presidential Decree No. 1578 declaring Calauit a wildlife sanctuary.

Carried by the ship Don Salvador II, 104 animals belonging to eight species, including gi-

IN CALAUIT/A9

Police now want custody of 'Batasan 5'

By Luige A. del Puerto,
Michael Lim Ubac
and Norman Bordadora

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE yesterday asked the Department of Justice to transfer custody of five party-list lawmakers charged with rebellion from the House of Representatives to PNP authorities.

The move was made in reaction to Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza's decision to leave the House in Quezon City on Monday night to go to the Senate in Pasay City, according to PNP spokesperson Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao.

Maza went to the Senate to attend a bicameral conference committee hearing on the proposed juvenile justice system act and returned to the House within hours.

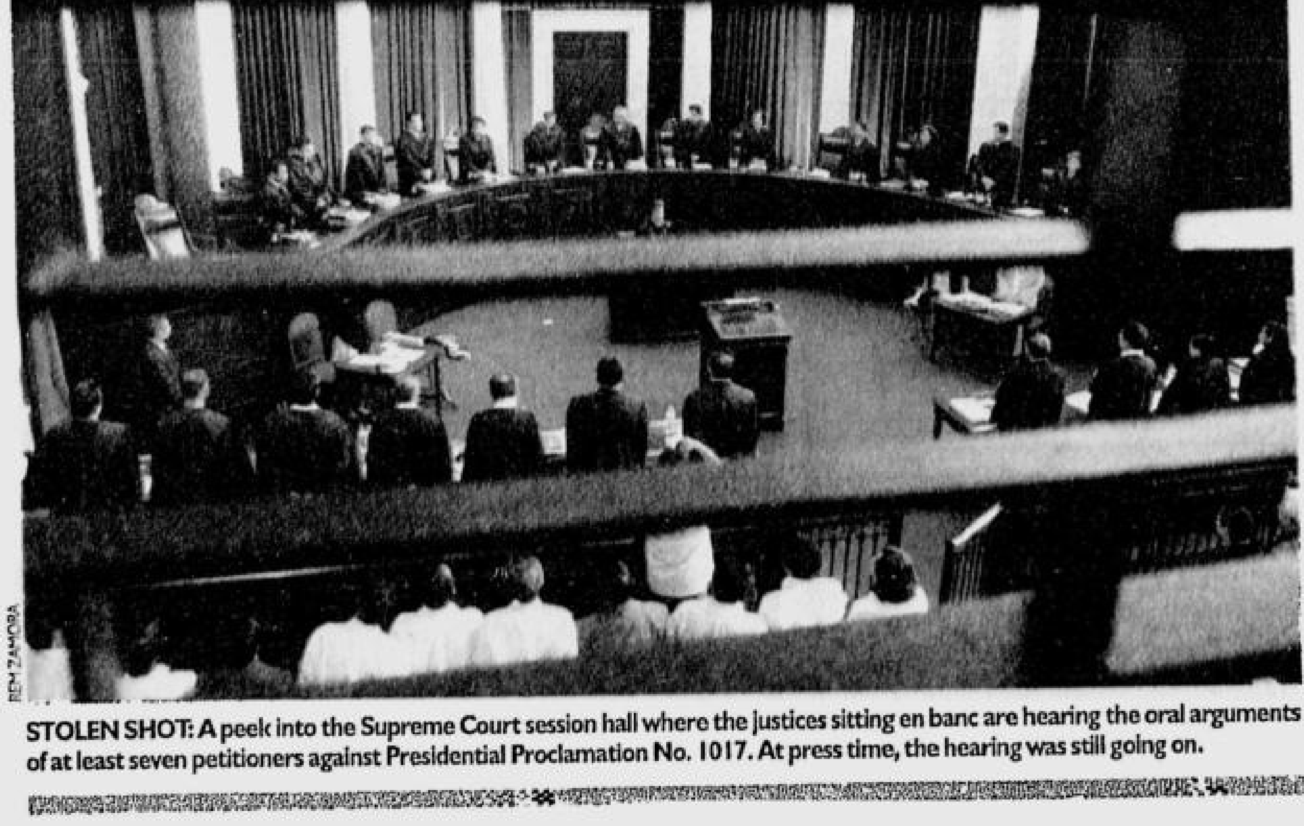
The PNP deemed Maza's action a "breach in courtesy," Pagdilao said.

PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao and Speaker Jose de Venecia had earlier agreed that the House would have custody of Maza, Bayan Muna Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casiño, Joel Virador and Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano who were among those charged with rebellion on the heels of President Macapagal-Arroyo's declaration of a state of national emergency on Feb. 24. The declaration has since been lifted. .

But in an interview yesterday in which he was asked to comment on the police request to the DOJ for cus-

POLICE/A8

'Martial law masquerading as Proclamation No. 1017'


REM ZAMORA

STOLEN SHOT: A peek into the Supreme Court session hall where the justices sitting en banc are hearing the oral arguments of at least seven petitioners against Presidential Proclamation No. 1017. At press time, the hearing was still going on.

By Armand N. Nocum and Leila B. Salaverria

CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATES YESTERDAY URGED THE Supreme Court to stop President Macapagal Arroyo from issuing martial law declarations masquerading as emergency proclamations.

Lawyers for seven petitioners said that Presidential Proclamation No. 1017 was actually a declaration of martial law in the guise of a proclamation of a national state of emergency to go around a constitutional mandate that Ms Arroyo must report to Congress within 48 hours of its issuance.

"We cannot allow anybody to experiment with our liberties," said Rene Saguisag, lawyer for Ninez Cacho-Olivarez, whose newspaper, The Daily Tribune, was raided by police after Ms Arroyo issued the proclamation of a state of national emergency on Feb. 24.

On Friday, Ms Arroyo lifted the proclamation, saying that a plot to unseat her by an alliance of communist guerrillas, rebel soldiers, politicians and businessmen had been aborted.

Government lawyers on Monday urged the magistrates to dismiss the petitions challenging the constitutionality of 1017, saying that the cancellation of the proclamation had rendered the issue moot and academic.

Oral arguments began at 1 p.m. and continued until press time.

"The declaration has been lifted, but the effect lingers," said Raul Pangalangan, former dean of the University of

MARTIAL LAW/A10

Pacquiao sorry for flight delay

By Nikko Dizon

MANNY PACQUIAO ISN'T AT ALL swell-headed.

It's just that he had his Monday blues when he staggered—his wife and two children in tow—into the Ninoy Aquino International Airport long after the Philippine Airlines check-in counter had closed, delaying the departure of his flight to Hong Kong by four minutes and frazzling PAL staff.

That the Filipino boxing sensation did not flash the winning smile that has graced his multimillion-peso TV commercials left that nagging feeling among airline staff that his fame had gone to his head.

Not so, said Eric Pineda, business manager to Pacquiao—the biggest ever endorser of San

PACQUIAO/A10

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms becoming frequent rains over eastern and southern Mindanao which may trigger flashfloods and landslides. The rest of Visayas and Luzon will be cloudy with isolated rainshowers

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/03/07/06 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Rains

Jailed solon trusts judge, but not DOJ

By Tarra V. Quismundo

ANAKPAWIS REP. CRISPIN BELTRAN YESTERDAY appeared in public for the first time since his arrest on Feb. 25 and expressed his frustration with the justice system.

"The machinations are not coming from the judge—we must credit him for that. The machinations are coming from the group of prosecutors under the DOJ (Department of Justice), which I call the Department of Injustice," Beltran told reporters during a brief interview after the hearing on his rebellion case at the Makati Regional Trial Court (RTC).

Arrested in the wake of President Macapagal-Arroyo's declaration of a state of emergency, Beltran, still recovering from a mild stroke he suffered in June 2005, has been detained at the Philippine National Police (PNP) General Hospital in Camp Crame since March 2 on the non-bailable charge of rebellion.

The DOJ filed charges against Beltran and recaptured 1st Lt. Lawrence San Juan of the Magdalo soldiers, who staged a failed mutiny in Makati City in 2003.

The charges were based on allegations that the two were involved in a conspiracy to violently topple the administration.

Closely guarded by police from the PNP Headquarters Support Service, a barong-clad Beltran, 73, arrived at the Makati City Justice Hall shortly before 10 a.m. yesterday for a scheduled hearing on his motion for the judicial determination of probable cause of his indictment for rebellion.

No hope with DOJ

Beltran and his lawyer Romeo Capulong chose this recourse as they found no hope in making an appeal before the DOJ, which had hauled Beltran to court for a rebellion complaint filed by the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) on Feb. 27.

Inquest proceedings against Beltran were held the same day and the charges were elevated to court the next day, Capulong said.

Disappointed with Beltran's "hasty" indictment, Capulong filed a motion in court seeking the case's dismissal, citing that the DOJ only filed evidence and witnesses' statements irrelevant to allegations against Beltran.

"So far, I have trust in the judge," Capulong said of Makati RTC Branch 137 Pairing Judge Sixto Marella Jr., who yesterday heard their motion. (Marella, who is with Branch 138 is sitting in for the Branch 137 judge who's on leave.)

The prosecution said Beltran and Capulong shunned the chance for them to file their counter-affidavit on rebellion charges during inquest proceedings at the DOJ.

"Everybody's entitled to their opinion, but it's on record that we gave them the chance to controvert the allegations against [Beltran]. We are not saying Ka Crispin is guilty, what we're saying is there is enough reason to charge him in court," said Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco, lead counsel in a DOJ panel of five prosecutors.

Rangers major's arrest confirmed

DETAINED MAJ. JASON AQUINO had been recruiting enlisted men, officers and even senior military officials to join destabilization plots, the Army said yesterday as it confirmed the arrest of the former operations chief of the First Scout Rangers Regiment.

Aquino was serving under Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim who was dismissed as Scout Rangers commander last Feb. 23 after he indicated that he and his men planned to withdraw support from President Macapagal-Arroyo and join the protest rallies.

"There were reports he [Aquino] tried to recruit soldiers and even senior officers. I can't recall the dates anymore because there have been a series of reports," Army spokesperson Maj. Bartolome Bacarro told reporters.

Bacarro said he could not say if Aquino was involved in Lim's plan which was preempted by Ms Arroyo's declaration of a state of emergency.

In touch

"We have not ascertained if he is part of those planning to march [to Edsa]. He is not categorically with Lim. But they were in touch," Bacarro said.

He said Aquino was not recruiting soldiers specifically for the Feb. 24 protests. It was a "general participation in destabilization," he said.

Aquino was arrested when he reported for duty at the Army's Fort Bonifacio headquarters on Feb. 27, a day after Marine Col. Ariel Querubin, who was also implicated in the planned withdrawal of support and subsequently relieved as First Marine Brigade commander, precipitated a six-hour standoff at Marine headquarters.

Army chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon ordered Aquino's arrest on Feb. 23 for being without official leave [AWOL] and for his alleged recruitment activities.

Esperon had also dismissed Aquino as Scout Rangers operations chief on July 4, 2004 at the height of the "Hello Garci" tape scandal for distributing political pamphlets titled, "The New Order."

'Personal lectures'

The Army believes Aquino's recruitment activities have been going on since last year when he began distributing the pamphlets and holding "personal lectures," according to Bacarro.

He said that evidence showed that Aquino was connected with Para sa Bayan, an anti-Arroyo group reportedly headed by Lim.

Bacarro however said Aquino was not involved in the alliance that military and communist rebels have allegedly forged with opposition groups wanting to oust Ms Arroyo.

Neither was Aquino involved in "Oplan Hackle," a reported plan by some military officers to disrupt the Philippine Military Academy homecoming rites last month, he said.

Aquino, who was "baron" of the Philippine Military Academy Class 1991, is being investigated by a fact-finding body headed by Army Inspector General Maj. Gen. Ferdinand Bocobo.

He is detained at the Intelligence and Security Group Compound where Lt. Lawrence San Juan, a member of the Magdalo group of officers which staged the failed coup of July 2003, is also being held.

Bacarro said Bocobo had already submitted his recommendations on Lim's case to Esperon.

Lim has not been detained but ordered "restricted" to quarters at Fort Bonifacio. *Dona Pazzibugan*

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Polyphonic Ring Tones		6 tones	32 tones	6 tones	5 tones	5 tones	6 tones
Recordable Customized Ringer							●
Key Lock		●	●	●	●	●	
Colored LCD				●			●
Large LCD with Blue Backlight			●				
Lighted Handset Keypad			●	●	●	●	●
SMS (Text Messaging) Capable*				●	●	●	●
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Intercom w/ 2-way paging					●	●	
Speakerphone			●	●	●	●	●
Dual Keypads					●	●	
Telephone Answering System						●	
USB Connection							●
Infrared Port for Data Exchange							●
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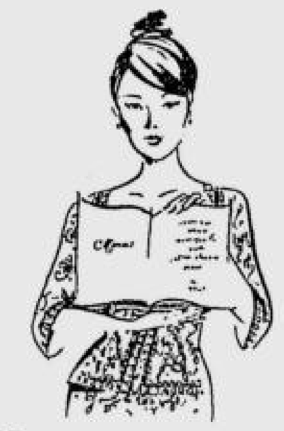

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Ex-governor's wife fights off extradition to US with SC ruling

A BID BY THE UNITED STATES TO EXtradite the wife of a jailed former governor to face charges of insurance fraud suffered a setback yesterday with the Supreme Court revoking an arrest warrant against her, court officials said.

The Supreme Court ruled that a lower court had abused its powers when it ordered the arrests in 2003 of Imelda Rodriguez and her husband Eduardo Rodriguez, a former governor of Quezon province.

The husband is serving a three-year prison term imposed by a court in Los Angeles, California, after earlier agreeing not to contest his extradition.

Washington had asked Manila to extradite the couple for grand theft and insurance fraud.

The case stemmed from a claim by the former governor that his wife had died in a traffic accident in the Philippines in 1985. He managed to collect $100,000 from one of four insurance companies.

Imelda Rodriguez meanwhile is also alleged to have separately received some $50,000 in claims after she said her mother died.

A lower court in Manila initially allowed the couple to post cash bail of P1 million each, but later cancelled the bond and ordered their arrest when the US Embassy appealed.

Imelda remained in the Philippines and asked the Supreme Court to allow her to avoid extradition.

The Supreme Court ruling said the wife was "not a flight risk" and the cancellation of her bond and the issuance of an arrest warrant without prior notice or hearing was a "violation of her right to due process." *AFP*

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1. Jenkins AL, *et al.* Depression of the glycemic Index by high levels of B-glucan fiber in two functional foods tested in type 2 diabetes. *Europ J Clin Nut* 2002; 56: 622-28. 2. Evidence-based nutritional approaches to the treatment and prevention of diabetes mellitus. Diabetes and Nutrition Study Group (DNSG) of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD). *Nutr Metab Cardiovasc Dis* 2003; 14: 373-394. 3. Position Statement. American Diabetes Association. *Diabetes Care* 2002; (1): 25 202-12. NEST0035. 4. Lavin JH , Read NW. The effect on hunger and satiety of slowing the absorption of glucose : relationship with gastric emptying and postprandial blood glucose and insulin responses. *Appetite* 25, 89-96, 1995. 5. Howarth NC.*et al.* Dietary fibre and weight regulation. *Nutr Rev* 2001: 59(5): 129-139

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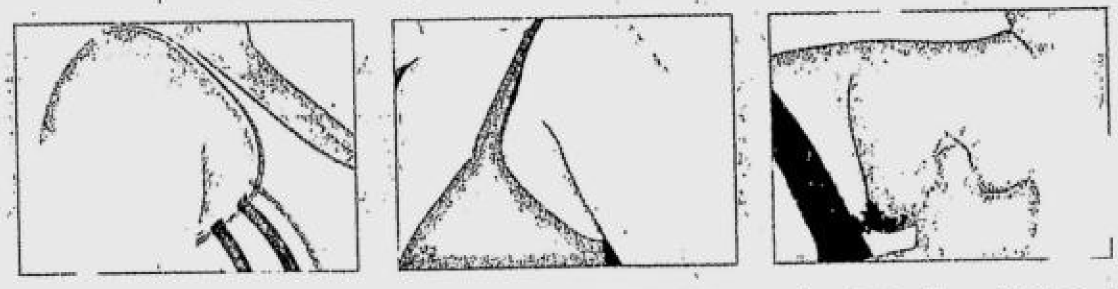

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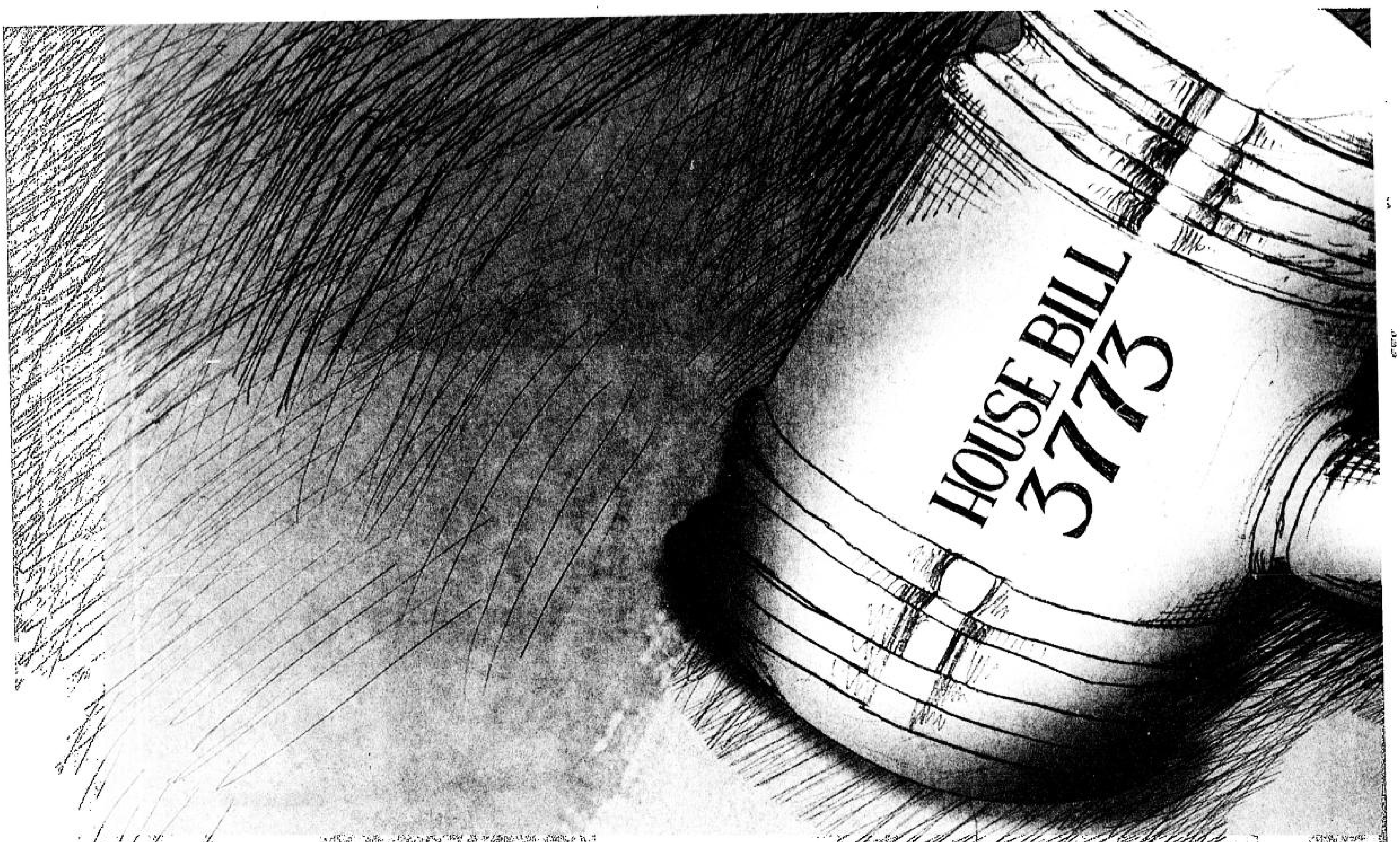

Stop at 2!

Or, your kids won't go to college.

The Philippine Congress is back in session. Among the bills scheduled for hearing is House Bill 3773. It centers on the creation of an integrated and comprehensive national policy on effective population management. This cleverly written bill appears well meaning at first reading. But looking into its many provisions, one of them, a provision limiting the number of children out of every family that may be entitled to government services, House Bill 3773 should be a cause for alarm.

With the objective of lowering the birth rate among Filipino families, section 12 of the bill gives incentives to couples who have stopped having children after the first two have been born: Free Tertiary education for two children.

Couples for Christ believes that this provision is Anti-Poor. It puts to a disadvantage an indigent child who may have excelled during his elementary or high school years but because he comes from a family of three, the state will deny him a scholarship grant in college. If the government is blaming the average size of the Filipino family for the country's poverty, this bill is not helping any. In fact, it worsens the situation. It deprives the poor of decent living by keeping good but indigent students out of school.

The growing number of out-of-school teens is already an indication of the kind of economy this country is suffering from. Therefore, to help the economy, Congress must not waste time debating House Bill 3773. Instead, they should be busy finding lucrative jobs for Filipinos and giving free education to the youth so that these kids no longer roam the streets. Help them rather become better educated, gainfully employed, as productive as they can be, and not pushed to be another generation of slum dwellers in the future.

Couples For Christ condemns House Bill 3773 as an Act that is Anti-Poor, Anti-Family, Anti-Filipino and Anti-Life. The funding for this program can be better channeled to the basic health care services of the poor rather than only for their masterfully-crafted phrase: "reproductive health" – a euphemism for sterilization and abortion.

Voice out your opposition to House Bill 3773. Convince your Congressmen to vote against this bill, for the sake of the poor.

Inspire them to re-channel their brilliance and energies to Gawad Kalinga. Gawad Kalinga builds up the dignity of the poor, builds homes, builds communities. Gawad Kalinga builds a nation.

COUPLES FOR CHRIST

Pro-God. Pro-Family. Pro-Poor. Pro-Life.

LEYTE AID. Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the Philippine National Red Cross, accepts from Mirant Philippines president and CEO JR Harris a check for P1 million as part of the power firm's assistance for the victims of the landslide in St. Bernard, Southern Leyte. Mirant was among other private entities which had also provided relief goods and man-power support at the onset of the tragedy.

Noli asks Kuwait ruler to spare Pinay

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE RULER OF KUWAIT HAS ASSURED VISITing Vice President Noli de Castro that he would do all he can to spare the life of Marilou Ranario, a Filipino domestic helper sentenced to death by hanging by a Kuwaiti court in September 2005 for killing her employer, the Office of the Vice President said in a statement yesterday.

It said De Castro, who flew to Kuwait on Saturday, had a one-on-one meeting with Emir Sheik Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday afternoon. He also met with Crown Prince Sheik Nawaf and Prime Minister Sheik Nasser.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had sought the emir's intercession in the Ranario case in a letter last January in which she said she would be sending a top-level delegation to follow up on her appeal.

With De Castro were Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait Amable Aguiluz, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Esteban Conejos and Owwa Deputy Administrator Angelo Jimenez. Also with the delegation were De Castro's wife Arlene and two members of his staff, Jesse Andres and Pong Ponferrada.

During his meeting with the emir, De Castro extended the country's condolences on the death of the previous emir, the current ruler's brother, Emir Sheik Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, and followed up on the request of Ms Arroyo.

"The Vice President sought the Emir's intercession in talking to the aggrieved family of the victim and ask their forgiveness to save the life of Ms Ranario," Andres said in the statement released by De Castro's office.

In the statement, De Castro said the emir explained to them how the Kuwaiti justice system works so that the Philippine mission would have a better understanding of the options still open to save Ranario's life.

The Vice President added he was optimistic that Ranario's life would be spared, considering the discovery of new evidence that would greatly help her defense in the appeals court of Kuwait. De Castro said that he could not disclose the new evidence as it could jeopardize Ranario's appeal.

Zuño and Andres, who is also a lawyer, would assist Ranario in her appeal. Ranario's defense team is headed a former brigadier general in the Kuwaiti police force, De Castro's statement said.

Reports said Ranario, a native of Surigao del Sur and mother of two, had admitted attacking her her female employer for uttering unsavory remarks against Filipinos. If her sentence is carried out, she would be the first woman to be hanged in Kuwait.

De Castro said that a team of doctors from a Kuwaiti University were also to look into Ranario's mental condition and he hoped their findings would support the contention of the defense that Ranario suffered from temporary insanity when she committed the crime.

De Castro said that offering blood money to the victim's family was also an option but that was not being considered yet as the delegation was focused on obtaining a commutation of the death sentence.

On Sunday, De Castro joined overseas Filipino Workers in a Mass for Ranario. He praised the over 85,000 OFWs in Kuwait who were recognized there as "highly qualified, devoted, honest and 'perfect' workers."

Kin of teachers buried in Leyte get DepEd aid

By Alcuin Papa

RELATIVES OF TEACHERS WHO WERE buried in the mudslide in Southern Leyte will be receiving financial assistance from the Department of Education (DepEd).

DepEd Officer in Charge Fe Hidalgo said yesterday she ordered DepEd Region 8 Director Sol Matugas to immediately review and assess financial assistance for relatives of the teachers who perished based on their length of service.

"These teachers died in the line of duty. The remunerations that each family will be getting will vary depending on each teacher's annual earnings. But each family will definitely receive their share," Hidalgo said.

More than 100 bodies were recovered and around 1,000 residents are missing and presumed dead in the landslide.

At least six school teachers and the principal of the Guinsaugon Elementary School died when the landslide hit their area last February. The school was reportedly having a program for the students when tons of mud buried the entire school and hundreds of houses in the area.

Hidalgo also said the department's immediate concern is children who were supposed to graduate this school year. Schoolchildren who survived the disaster will be provided with educational insurance, continuing medical exams and guidance counseling, the DepEd OIC said.

Most of the surviving children, Hidalgo disclosed, have already expressed their interest in taking vocational courses.

Hidalgo said she instructed Matugas to put a trust-fund for continuing scholarships for the survivors.

Meanwhile, Hidalgo said she has advised their regional office to report to the DepEd main office funds that have been collected for the victims of the mudslide.

"We encourage decentralization but since they are still under the department, we don't want people to suspect anything. The money collected must go to a trust fund and this will be reported to us. We will be giving regular accounting of what is coming in," Hidalgo said.

NZ PM coming

NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER HELEN Clark will be in the country from March 13 to 16 on an official visit highlighting the 40th year of diplomatic relations between Manila and Wellington, the Department of Foreign Affairs announced.

It said Clark will attend the Regional Interfaith Dialogue in Mactan, Cebu, on March 14 to be cochaired by the Philippines, New Zealand, Australia and Indonesia. She would then travel to nearby Bohol for a meeting with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The meeting is expected to tackle the need for stronger cooperation in the fight against terrorism and transnational crimes as well as in alternative energy sources and fuel-efficient technologies, the DFA said.

In Bohol, Clark will also visit local projects in ecotourism, one of the major beneficiaries of her country's annual development assistance to the Philippines. Focusing on natural resource management, indigenous peoples, and education, the New Zealand Agency for International Development has allotted $4 million for the Philippines for the current 2005-2006 fiscal year.

The two leaders last met in July 1999, when then Vice President Arroyo went to New Zealand for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Women Leaders Network Meeting.

The Philippines is New Zealand's biggest trading partner among Asean countries and the 18th biggest worldwide. The country is a reliable supplier of computer and electronic components to New Zealand, and a large export market for the latter's dairy products, the DFA noted. *Volt Contreras*

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Lawyer admits receiving ₱2M for Magdalo troops

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE LAWYER OF THE MAGDALO GROUP OF soldiers who are detained for their participation in the failed coup of July 2003 received some P2 million in behalf of the families of his clients from a foundation identified with jailed ex-President Joseph Estrada, according to police officials.

Of the sum, some P1 million was earmarked for the legal fees of the soldiers who were charged with coup d' etat in connection with the Oakwood mutiny, the officials said.

The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group is investigating reports that businessmen and politicians had funded the most recent coup attempt on Feb. 23 that the government claimed to have foiled.

According to Sr. Supt. Asher Dolina, chief of the CIDG-National Capital Region, Ruel Pulido, one of the lawyers of the Magdalo soldiers, had been summoned to appear today to explain how the money that he received was disbursed.

Dolina said Manuel "Beaver" Lopez, president of the Saludo sa Kawal Pilipino Foundation, had told him that the foundation had given P1 million for the families of the Magdalo soldiers, and another P1 million—disbursed in checks of P700,000 and P300,000—for their legal fees.

"All of these were received by Pulido. We want to know how it [the money] was used and who received them," said Dolina.

From Singapore, Pulido said: "We got the money. Everything is properly documented. Not a single cent went to the firm. We solicited for soldiers who were deprived of salaries as punishment."

But Pulido said he could not disclose the amount because he received it as a lawyer and would have to seek permission from his clients before doing so.

Estrada has admitted to having given a total of P8 million to soldiers belonging to the Scout Ranger Regiment, the Philippine Marines and the families of the Magdalo soldiers in December 2005. But he claimed the money was meant to be a Christmas present, not to fund a coup.

Corrections

IN THE FEB. 21 ISSUE, an Across the Nation story on Page A8—"Maid's kin suspect foul play in Singapore death"—misstated the country where Filipino maid Haldee de la Calzada had died. De la Calzada died in Lebanon—not Singapore.

* * *

IN THE MARCH 6 ISSUE, a front-page story—"Subic rape case: Don't judge me too harshly, says victim"—misstated that Nicole, who was allegedly raped by four US servicemen, was with her 12-year-old sister in a bar on the evening of Nov. 1 last year. The victim's counsel, Evalyn Ursua, clarified that only Nicole, her 24-year-old half-sister and a longtime family friend went to the bar, while the victim's 12-year-old sister stayed behind in the hotel.

* * *

IN THE MARCH 6 issue, a table accompanying a Business Monday article on Page B2-1—"Economic hits and misses, of the past 20 years"—misstated the average GNP growth rates of the different administrations since 1986. Based on the revised and updated data of the National Statistical Coordination Board, 4.574 percent, not 4.428 percent, was the average GNP growth rate during the Aquino administration from 1986 to 1991; 4.381 percent, not 4.391 percent, during the Ramos administration from 1992 to 1997; 3.336 percent, not 3 percent, during the Estrada administration from 1998 to 2000; and 4.938 percent, not 4.96 percent, during the present Macapagal administration from 2001 to 2005.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, March 8, 2006
1st Week of Lent
John of God

1st Reading: Jon 3:1-10
Gospel: Luke 11:29-32

As the crowd increased, Jesus began to speak in this way, "People of the present time are evil people. They ask for a sign, but no sign will be given to them except the sign of Jonah. As Jonah became a sign for the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be a sign for this generation. The Queen of the South will rise up on Judgment Day with the people of these times and accuse them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and here there is greater than Solomon. The people of Nineveh will rise up on Judgment Day with the people of these times and accuse them, for Jonah's preaching made them turn from their sins, and here there is greater than Jonah."

Commentary

Nineveh is told it will be destroyed because of the evil it has done. But the people—from the leaders to the least—hear the word of the prophet and stop everything to fast and pray. It is declared that everyone must turn from the evil they have done and the violence they have been a part of... and they are spared. This is our time to stop everything, and pray/fast, especially the evil and violence we do. We get no sign but the sign of Jonah, not the whale, but the call to listen to the wisdom of repentance—or the citizens of Nineveh will rise and condemn us at the judgment because we did not listen to the Word of Jesus the Lord.

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REMEDIAL LAW (CIVIL PROCEDURE)—Cause of action; definition and elements—A cause of action is a formal statement of the operative facts that give rise to a remedial right. The question of whether the complaint states a cause of action is determined by its averments regarding the acts committed by the defendant. Thus, it "must contain a concise statement of the ultimate or essential facts constituting the plaintiff's cause of action." Failure to make a sufficient allegation of a cause of action in the complaint "warrants its dismissal." A cause of action, which is an act or omission by which a party violates the right of another, has these elements: 1) the legal right of the plaintiff; 2) the correlative obligation of the defendant to respect that legal right; and 3) an act or omission of the defendant that violates such right. (Citations omitted.) (Justice Panganiban, Third Division, Goodyear Philippines, Inc. v. Sy, G. R. No. 154554, November 9, 2005) DIGEST BY R. B. VERA

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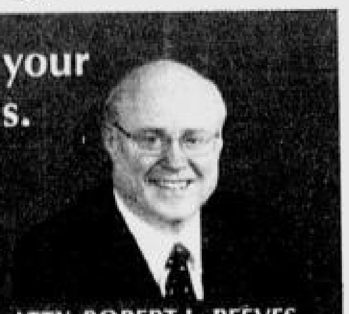

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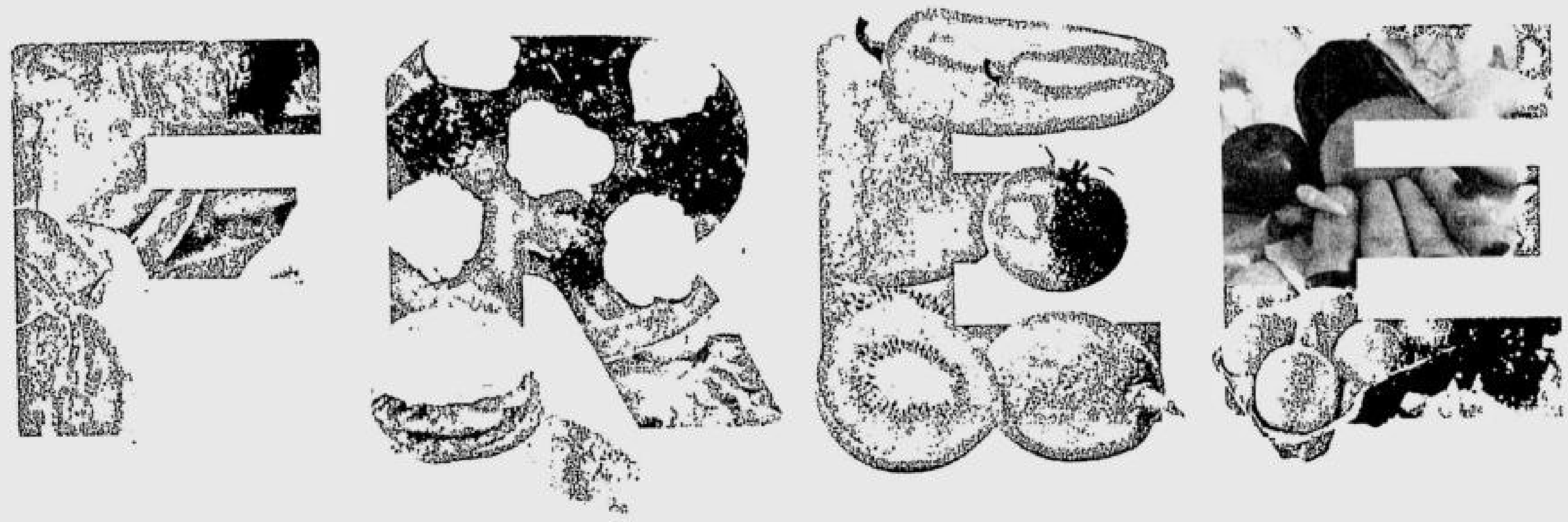

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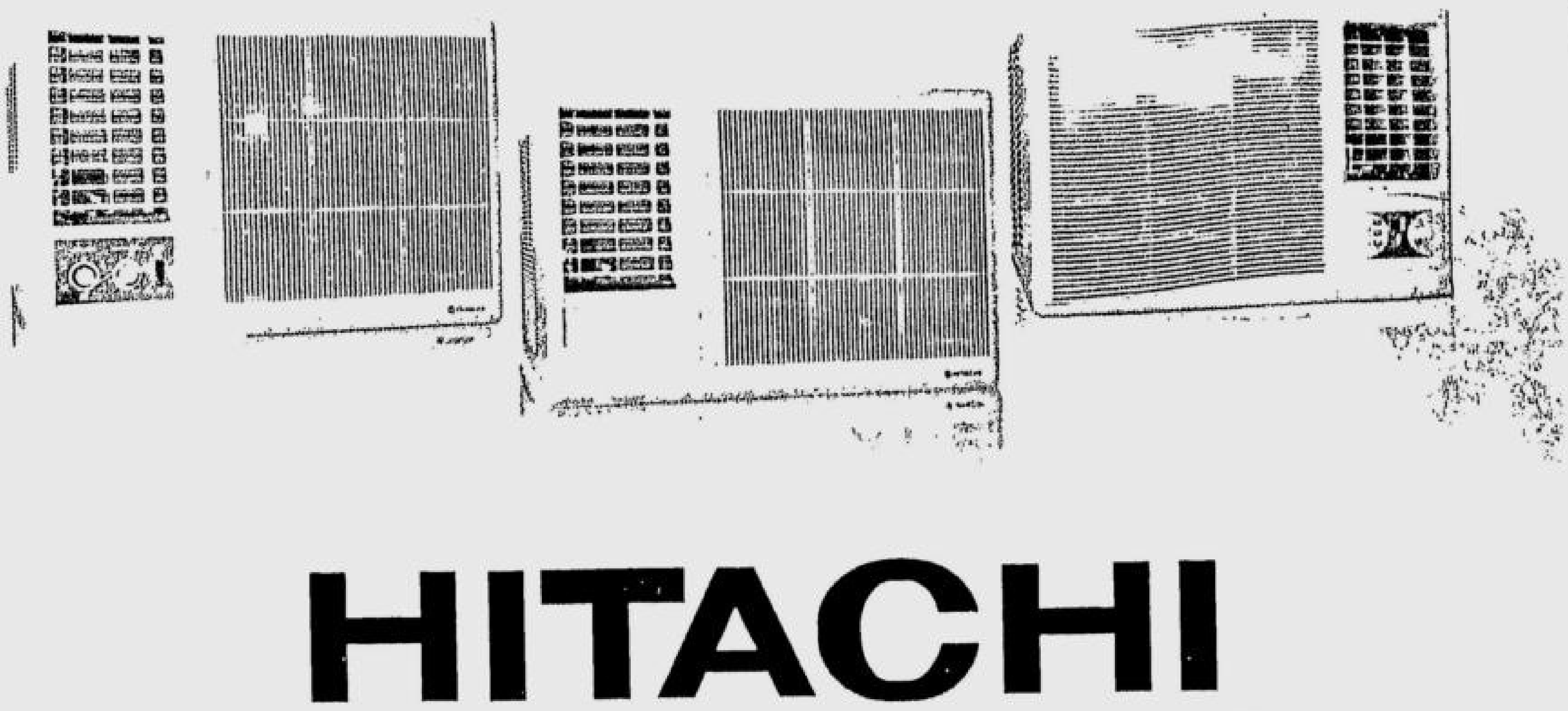

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GMA puts positive spin to brain drain

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

WHILE MOST OBSERVERS AGREE that Filipinos are leaving the country in droves for lack of job opportunities here, President Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday that the worker exodus was propelled by strong overseas demand for their talents and not by desperate conditions at home.

Ms Arroyo gave this positive spin to the brain drain that has long afflicted the country in an interview with dzBB radio.

"I would like to differentiate between those that are losing hope and those that are leaving," the President said. "There are those who leave the country not because they are desperate but because they have a good chance, since Filipinos are in demand and are world-class."

Ms Arroyo said she was proud of the fact that there were now 8 million Filipinos working in 140 countries.

"Most of them have very good positions in their jobs," she said.

She noted that Filipinos comprised the biggest migrant group in the world behind the Italians (13 million) and Mexicans (10 million), who were mostly staying in the United States.

"Those who want to lose hope are those that also want to destroy our future," the President added. "We have to be united to develop our country and uplift our lives."

While overseas Filipino workers pump in billions of dollars in remittances that have lifted the living conditions of their families here and propped up the peso's value, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration has warned that the exodus of talent has put industries, particularly the health services, on the verge of collapse.

Because of the high demand for their services abroad, the country's hospitals are suffering from a dearth of nurses and even doctors, who have given up the scalpel to work as nurses abroad because of the higher pay.

The POEA is doing an inventory of the Philippine work force to determine which sectors are experiencing critical labor shortages and find ways of stanching the outflow.

Senators eye bigger raise for state workers

By TJ Burgonio

SOME SENATORS ARE OPEN TO tripling the P1,000 increase in the monthly pay of 1.3 million government employees being proposed by House members.

Opposition Sen. Sergio Osmeña III proposed increasing the amount to P3,000 during a caucus of senators late Monday on the House measure appropriating P13.1 billion to fund the adjustment in the compensation of government workers.

Osmeña, who said he would propose the amendment during floor debates on the House bill, noted that government employees lost 23 percent of their purchasing power since 2000. A P1,000 increase would give them only 8 percent more, he said.

"We should be ashamed," said Osmeña.

According to Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, a group of opposition senators that included his mother, Sen. Loi Ejercito, and Senators Alfredo Lim and Jamby Madrigal, favored the P3,000 increase for the same reasons.

The senators failed to approve the measure on second reading last night, deferring debates for today. They have yet to agree on which proposal to adopt.

Sen. Ralph Recto has also filed a bill proposing to raise the salaries of state employees by P2,000.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said there was consensus at the caucus to pass the measure. He said the Senate had received a certification from the National Treasurer that funds were available for the increase only last Tuesday.

But since the certification covered only the P13.1 billion in the House measure, if the senators vote to adopt a higher amount, this would only become effective at a later date, Drilon said.

The proposed measure was introduced just days after President Macapagal-Arroyo signed on Feb. 28 an administrative order authorizing the grant of a P1,000 additional compensation to the country's over a million state employees that include policemen, soldiers, firemen and other uniformed personnel.

Drilon said that if the measure is passed, the P1,000 increase under Ms Arroyo's order would be superseded.

Media feel pinch of Crame security

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE MEDIA IS APPARENTLY BEARING THE brunt for the failure of the police guards at Camp Crame to stop supporters of a militant lawmaker from entering the camp a few days ago and "creating a scene."

At least two reporters, one from a tabloid and the other from a TV network, had police guards "escort" them to the press office inside the camp yesterday.

One of the guards explained that security at the camp was tightened as a result of Sunday's incident, Chona Yu, a reporter for Bulgar, said.

"They said it was the order of the camp commander. I pressed [them] and they said it was because of the incident on Sunday," Yu said.

Yu said a guard then "escorted" her to the Public Information Office where the PNP Press Corps holds office.

"When we arrived, he looked for the list of reporters and asked the PIO staff if they knew me. I found it highly unusual," she said. Yu has been covering Camp Crame for the last three years.

On Sunday, about 30 supporters of Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran managed to sneak past the guards at the gate and, putting on red T-shirts emblazoned with "Free Ka Bel," gather in front of the PNP hospital where Beltran was confined.

Dr. Aldaba-Lim; 89

ESTEFANIA ALDABA-LIM, PH D, PASSED away at her home on March 7. She was 89.

Dr. Aldaba-Lim was a former assistant secretary general of the United Nations Children's Fund's International Year of the Child, secretary of social welfare and president of the Girl Scouts of the Philippines. She obtained her MA from the University of the Philippines and her doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Michigan. She founded the Museo Pambata in Manila.

She is survived by her children and their spouses Cheche and Del Lazaro, Nina Yuson, Bertie and Carla, Louie and Frieda, Winnie and Patty Yusah, and Ricky and Regina, and 17 grandchildren.

Her remains are at the Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City. Interment will be on March 10 after the 9 a.m. Mass.

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'It's God's plan that I'm here now'

From page A1

mitted it was "very difficult" to be the leader of the country in the face of the criticism hurled against her.

Ms Arroyo trained her guns on her critics, specifically lawmakers who had bedeviled her with a string of high-profile investigations into alleged government wrongdoing.

"We have enemies that are engaging in excessive politicking. They have politicized all investigations in the Senate and this is the reason why they have failed to pass new legislation," she said.

"Just like my proposal to increase the salaries of government workers—they have neglected this because they used all their time to investigate."

Eating habits

"What has come out of their investigations that are supposed to be in aid of legislation? What laws have come out of these investigations?"

She also berated unnamed legislators for their work habits.

"They eat during session hours. They make privilege speeches after opening each session and after just a few moments, they adjourn."

The President said she herself had ordered an investigation into corruption cases in government but the probe was being done quietly—"and not for headlines."

Not once during the 30-minute interview was there any reference to the "Hello Garci" tape controversy—the supposed wiretapped conversations between Ms Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano on rigging the results of the 2004 presidential election.

Unresolved to this day

It was the "Hello Garci" tape that plunged the administration into its worst crisis which is unresolved up to today.

Ms Arroyo appeared to issue a veiled threat that she would not think twice about imposing emergency measures if it became necessary.

"I will not hesitate to do what is needed in order to maintain peace and order in our country. There are those who have criticized me about freedom. But if the communists and rebel soldiers take over, the people should realize that they would take away our freedom," she said.

Ms Arroyo defended her decision to declare an emergency and said the economy remained strong despite the coup jitters.

Ready for talks

"In the past street disturbances, in Edsa I and Edsa II, the economy suffered in both instances," she said. "The peso fell, interest rates shot up, and the stock market plunged. This time, the opposite happened because we were quick to act and we averted violence."

The President confirmed she was willing to sit down with her political foes and with restive soldiers to try and defuse the political crisis but said her patience had its limits.

"I have long invited them to work toward unity. But for how long will I continue wooing them? I am not taking back my call for us to unite but I cannot spend all my time and energy on this because I also have to attend to our economy," she said.

AFP focus group

After the program, Ms Arroyo told reporters she had tapped Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor to head the proposed face-to-face dialogue with the soldiers, which she wanted held "as soon as possible."

She said she had asked Defensor to determine who would sit down with her in the dialogue because she preferred to talk to "focus groups" on specific issues they want to tackle.

In the radio interview, Ms Arroyo said her decision to prioritize the economy had proved to be correct based on the strong peso, the resurgent stock market and a shrinking budget deficit.

"I want to use all my energy to ensure that this momentum we have created will be translated to greater benefits that would be felt by Filipinos, especially the poor," she said.

Not a hasty move

Told that the poor were not feeling the gains in the economy, Ms Arroyo said: "That won't happen overnight but it is starting."

She said she firmly believed in the principles of democracy but at the same time believed that people abusing freedom should be stopped to ensure that the country remained free.

Saying she understood people's apprehensions over her emergency proclamation, Ms Arroyo explained her decision was not hasty.

She referred to the alleged alliance among the extreme Right, the Left and their political supporters who she said had tried to overthrow her administration.

She warned that if these plotters took power, they would be the ones who would destroy the democracy the country now enjoyed.

This was why she had to move and declare an emergency to protect the national interest, she said.

"We should be vigilant so that we can defend our democracy," she said. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

GMA tirade raises hackles of senators

By TJ Burgonio

SENATORS YESTERDAY BRISTLED at President Macapagal-Arroyo's tirade against the Senate for focusing on investigating government scandals instead of concentrating on making laws.

Lawmakers said they were merely doing their job.

"The President's spiteful tirade against senators is, again, unfortunate," Senate President Franklin Drilon said, adding that Ms Arroyo must be referring to findings of the Senate committee on agriculture on the alleged P728-million fertilizer fund scam.

"We maintain that, under the democratic principle of check and balance in government, the Senate must continue to exercise its oversight functions to stop the excesses of the executive department and to curb public corruption," he said.

Opposition Sen. Sergio Osmeña III pointed out that the senators' duty consisted of passing legislation and monitoring laws.

Broken laws

"Unfortunately, under this administration, so many laws have been broken with impunity. We have to spend four times more than usual in finding out how we can plug the loopholes [such as in] the fertilizer fund," he told reporters. "What's the use of passing new laws when we're not even following existing laws?"

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile echoed his colleagues' views, saying it was the duty of the Senate to inquire into anomalies committed by government officials.

"If there are things to be aired or scrutinized, it is the duty of the representatives of the people—in pursuance of their oversight functions—to scrutinize the activities of people wielding power in the country and to look into the transactions in government," he said.

Coordination needed

Enrile, however, stressed that while independent of each other, Malacañang and the Senate should "coordinate."

"You cannot fault the executive in feeling the heat because it is the implementing body and each side must understand the function of the other. They have their opinion in the Palace, the legislators have their own opinion," he said.

"Even the legislators are divided—some would support the Palace in any way, while others are not in good accord [with the Palace] and would raise their voice, their opinion, their perception of things. That is democracy," he said.

Osmeña pointed out that the Senate's record would always depend on the quality of legislation transmitted by the House of Representatives.

Infirm bills

"The House, over the past two years, has sent to us 800 bills renaming streets, converting provincial roads into national roads... These bills are so infirm that we have to check everything, like funds," Osmeña said. "We have already P800 billion in unfunded appropriations."

Drilon and Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago also scoffed at Palace claims that the Senate was dragging its feet on the House measure appropriating P13.1 billion to fund the P1,000 increase in the monthly pay of 1.3 million government employees.

The Senate has been deliberating on the measure since Feb. 28 when the National Treasurer certified that funds were available to support the increases.

IN THE KNOW

What went before

ON FEB. 24, POLICE FILED REbellion charges against 16 persons, including Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casiño and Joel Virador (all of Bayan Muna), Rafael Mariano (Anakpawis) and Liza Maza (Gabriela), for involvement in a supposed plot to overthrow President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Three days later, Virador was arrested at the Philippine Airlines ticketing office in Davao City.

Speaker Jose de Venecia, in agreement with the other members of the House, said he would take Virador and the other four, who had gone to Congress that day, into his custody, within the confines of the chamber, pending the outcome of a formal investigation of the charges against them.

The following day, the lawmakers now known as the "Batasan 5" signed a document waiving their right to press charges of arbitrary detention, paving the way for a preliminary investigation.

The conduct of the probe was endorsed by a Department of Justice prosecution panel.

The Batasan 5 said an inquest could not be done "because we have not been arrested."

They asserted their "right to a preliminary investigation and not to be subjected to or accept the validity of any inquest proceeding."

"We agree to be under the protective custody of the House," they said.

They also maintained that only a court could issue valid arrest warrants after charges had been filed in court.

But Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao, spokesperson of the Philippine National Police, said that as far as the PNP was concerned, the five were already "under arrest."

Because of the Batasan 5's refusal to appear before inquest prosecutors, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño declared the case as "submitted [to the DOJ] for resolution." ***Cyril L. Bonabente, PDI Research***

Journalism 101, according to GMA

From page A1

ticed "a culture of responsible journalism" and this was why GMA 7 was number one in the ratings.

"*Malayo doon sa* number 2 (It is far ahead of the No. 2 station)," she added, without explicitly mentioning rival network ABS-CBN.

She said she was not after "praise releases" from the media—she only wanted them to be fair, responsible and not bordering on sedition when reporting the news.

Four days after lifting her controversial emergency proclamation, Ms Arroyo gave her first media interview over dzBB radio, a fairly lengthy talk simultaneously shown over GMA 7's morning television show "Unang Hirit."

Fears persist

Ms Arroyo's relationship with the media fell to a new low after she issued Proclamation No. 1017, which allowed the military and the police not only to crack down on alleged coup plotters but also on media entities supposedly helping the cause of the destabilizers.

Alarmed by the raid on The Daily Tribune newspaper and by police threats to impose "guidelines" on news reporting, militant groups denounced what they saw as a government attempt to curtail press freedom and likened Ms Arroyo to the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Ms Arroyo's decision to lift the emergency after one week failed to ease media fears, especially in the wake of statements by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez that seven other media personalities were being monitored for possible charges of inciting to sedition.

Ms Arroyo told news host Mike Enriquez that she agreed to be interviewed because he and his network practiced "responsible journalism."

'A model journalist'

"Don't think I'm sucking up to you, but you are a model journalist," she told Enriquez in Filipino.

Enriquez told Ms Arroyo that, on the contrary, he had also been critical in his broadcasts.

"*Nagbabatikos ka ... ganoon pa man, hindi ka* seditious (You criticize ... still, you're not seditious)," she countered.

Ms Arroyo said she was actually looking for a journalist whom she could hold up as an example of someone who not only would heap praise on the government but who would also criticize—and knew the "limits."

Knowing the difference

"You know the difference between fiscalizing journalism and sedition," Ms Arroyo said.

Enriquez said the network had a manual containing guidelines on how it should cover the news and that it was like a "bible" to GMA reporters.

"That's why even the people know who are responsible and who are not," Ms Arroyo said.

When Enriquez asked if she agreed that media was "responsible, on the whole," the President said: "I don't want to make an extensive commentary on that, especially now when some people are being investigated."

She noted the need for everyone to be reminded that having rights meant having responsibilities as well.

Police now want custody of 'Batasan 5;' JDV tired

From page A1

tody of the lawmakers, De Venecia said: "I'm tired [of being] their custodian, [of being] big brother of five.

"They are using my [conference room] as dormitory. I serve them breakfast, lunch and dinner and provide round-the-clock security."

He added that the House was spending for their food, water and power consumption.

The Speaker did not rule out a possible mass eviction of the five from the House similar to ABS-CBN's reality show "Big Brother."

But when that time comes, the police should be armed with an arrest warrant, he said.

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno said that with the incident, the House leadership violated the terms of the custodial arrangement between the chamber and the PNP.

"If Liza Maza disappeared, the sergeant at arms (Bayani Fabic) would have been liable. In fact, [he was] already liable when he allowed the person to leave. [The House] did not do [its] part," Puno told the INQUIRER.

A sixth party-list lawmaker, Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran, has been arrested and is now detained at Camp Crame. *(See story on Page A2.)*

No one above law

"Diplomacy is needed, but when arrest comes, no congressman is above the law," said De Venecia.

"The House's conscience is clear," he added.

Casiño said, however, that he and his colleagues were not asking for special treatment.

"If they want us to buy our own food, sleep in our own offices, fine with us," he said.

Ocampo said the Speaker could not "unilaterally lift the protective custody" afforded to them by the House.

"It's a plenary decision, and a unanimous one," he said.

Told that Majority Leader Prospero Nograles had earlier explained that the protective custody contained in Resolution No. 1169 only "expresse[d] the sense of the House," Ocampo said: "Yes, but you must take seriously the sense of the House. Otherwise, who will respect you?"

'Breach of courtesy'

Despite the PNP's earlier statements that any one of the five lawmakers who would leave the Batasan complex would be arrested, the police decided against arresting Maza "so as not to make a big scene," Pagdilao said.

He said the PNP's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group made do with "monitoring the situation.".

"But [it] was ready to make the arrest should Representative Maza suddenly make a run for the door and decide to jump custody," he said.

Pagdilao described the incident as a "breach of courtesy."

"The custody remains with [the House] with the understanding that [it will] abide by what is proper," he said, adding that if one was under detention, one "should not just be ... allowed to go anywhere."

"In fact, what we know is that the House leadership did not authorize [Maza's] leave. If that happens, what is the assurance that the terms [of agreement] ... will be enforced?" Pagdilao said.

Puno said that in this case, Fabic could be held liable for infidelity in the custody of a detained person.

He said House Resolution No. 1169 providing protective custody to Maza et al. was merely "persuasive in character" and was "not a legal injunction."

Villar's van

Maza left the Batasan complex in a white van owned by Las Piñas Rep. Cynthia Villar at 8 p.m. on Monday after it became apparent that the House leadership would not lend her an official vehicle.

According to some members of the minority, an official vehicle would have extended the House's protective custody over Maza in her trip to the Senate and back.

Maza went ahead with her plan despite the absence of an assurance from De Venecia that she would not be arrested.

She was accompanied in the van by Villar and other members of the minority, as well as by a convoy of other lawmakers' vehicles and those of the media.

"I didn't think they meant to arrest her," Villar said upon their return to the House.

Asked if she would do it again despite possible arrest, Maza said: "We just have to do our job."

Puno said the police operatives assigned to observe the movements of the five party-list lawmakers could have easily cut Maza's convoy but decided against causing a commotion.

"[It also shows] that we're bending over backward as long as they keep their word," he said. "We [kept our word], but they didn't. We also have responsibilities under the law that we are charged to enforce."

Puno said that with the Monday incident and the PNP request for custody, he expected the House "at the very least" to hew to the custodial arrangements.

"We also expect the [Senate] sergeant at arms to be more diligent," he said, but added that the authorities would continue to respect the premises of the House pending the DOJ decision on the request for custody.

Controlling document

De Venecia said that should the DOJ grant the request, he would ask Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to make representations with the House leadership so he could be informed of the "controlling document."

The Speaker was referring to the document with which the five lawmakers waived their rights to press charges of arbitrary detention under Article 125 of the Revised Penal Code (law on arbitrary and illegal arrest). *(See In the Know above.)*

"The waiver ... is a sacred and sacrosanct instrument which the DOJ should respect," he said.

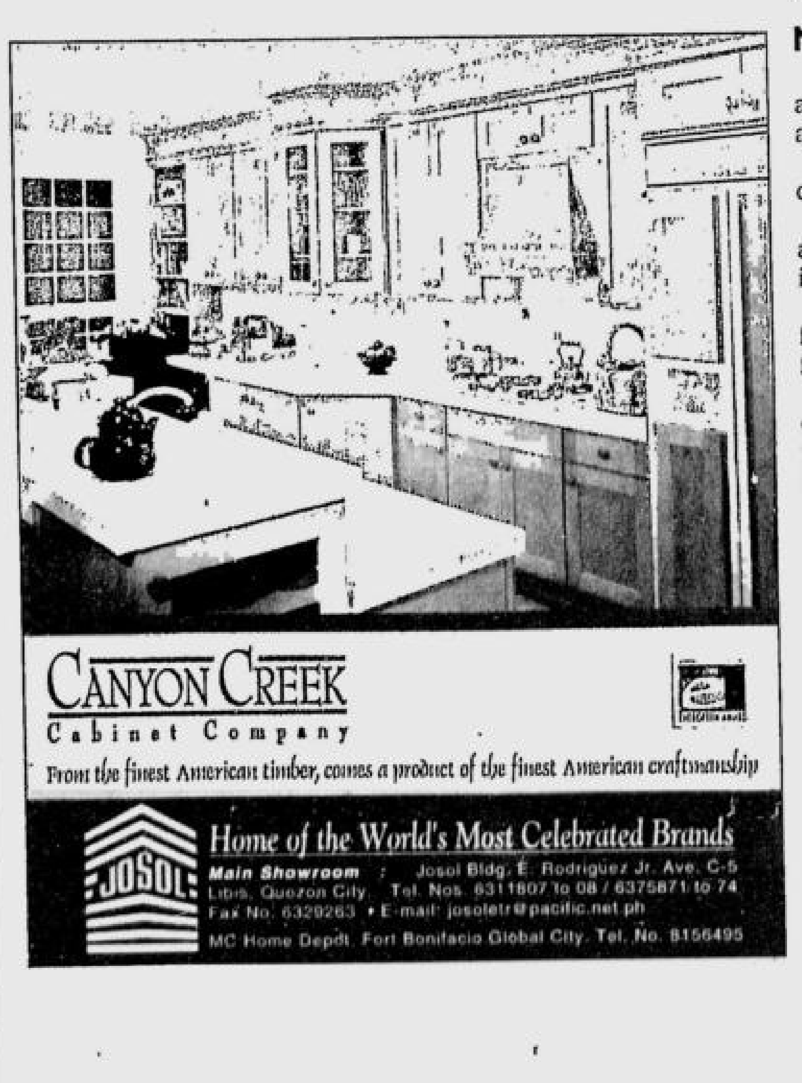
At a press conference on Monday, Ocampo declared that if he and his colleagues could not "obtain justice, then our options are open for our survival."

He said his being a former communist rebel was no reason to deprive him and the others of due process, such as a preliminary investigation and the issuance of warrants of arrest prior to being turned over to the police.

But Ocampo said that although rejoining the underground armed struggle remained an option, he and his colleagues still hoped that they could get due process from the present democratic system.

"They said we were charged with a continuing crime, but they could not say when the crime started. They tried to picture us as rebels but could not present a single piece of evidence. This is more of a propaganda war than a legal case," he said, adding:

"There has yet to be a preliminary investigation and judicial determination of probable cause. Pending that, we will continue to perform our official functions as lawmakers in and out of Congress."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In Calauit, Erap, Luli, Jinggoy are playmates

From page A1

raffes, zebras, gazelles and antelope, found their way to Palawan for what Marcos envisioned as the Philippines' version of the African safari.

Now, 29 years later, Calauit's wildlife population has grown to 1,151: The exotic species include 39 elands, 26 giraffes, 42 zebras, 148 waterbucks, five bushbucks and two impalas, and the indigenous species including 800 Calamian deer, 200 wild pigs, 28 mouse deer, five Palawan bearcats and four crocodiles.

The park's management, which is under the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development, is mulling over importing ostriches and elephants as well, said resident project manager Froilan Sariego.

No predators

"We bring in only animals that can live in close association with each other. No predators are allowed here," Sariego said.

And so Erap, Luli and Jinggoy live harmoniously.

The 4-year-old Jinggoy stands out among the 26 giraffes on the 3,760-hectare island for his stark orange skin and charming aloofness.

"He is not too friendly. Perhaps he fears being handcuffed by strangers," recreation and welfare officer Benito Sabio said jokingly of Jinggoy, apparently alluding to the giraffe's namesake who is facing plunder charges.

Jinggoy is known among Calauit's rangers as the most picky among the animals in the sanctuary, smelling his food and refusing to eat the leaves left over by the other giraffes: *"Iyan ang pinakamaarte dito. Parang kambing. Ayaw kumain kapag naamoy niyang nilawayan na ng iba yung pagkain."*

Luli, at 2 years old the youngest giraffe on the island, is the offspring of 14-year-old Eva, named after Ms Arroyo's mother.

Luli and Jinggoy's brother, General Lim—obviously named after Sen. Alfredo Lim—are frequent playmates, Sabio said.

The 11-year-old Erap apparently refuses to be lorded over by anyone, not even Mundita, a giraffe named after the head of the government's Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau.

Amused park visitors witnessed Erap's "quarrel" with Mundita on Saturday, slamming his long neck against the other's.

3,000 visitors yearly

Around 3,000 people, many of them foreigners, visit the Calauit Game Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary every year.

For fees of P250 (for Filipinos) and P350 (for foreigners), recreation officers take guests on a two-hour tour around the island on its lone six-wheel truck.

Calauit makes around P300,000 from tourism, but it hopes to boost its revenues with Seair's "From Paradise to Paradise" package, a trip from the world-famous Boracay island to Busuanga island, from where Calauit is only an hour and a half away by boat.

According to Sariego and Sabio, who have been working in the sanctuary since 1976, ahead of the animals' arrival, hunting continues in the park but arrest is difficult with only nine rangers and three guards for the entire island.

"The first stock of bearcats we got from Cartimar in Pasay, although we're sure they were found in Palawan," Sariego said.

Measly budget

The park, which receives a measly P4.1-million budget annually from the national government, needs at least P7 million to provide the proper care needed by the animals and hire more rangers to fend off poachers.

Private developers, such as Robert Yupangco of the popular Zoobic inside the Subic Bay Freeport, have expressed interest in improving Calauit. But the government remains hesitant.

"It might be good to have private management but we have to make sure that the animals will remain state property, because they are a treasure," Sariego said.

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Peso breaks 51 to $1 barrier

From page A1

another currency trader said.

Value traded at the Philippine Dealing System was heavy at $703 million.

"The peso continued to show strength due to portfolio inflows, OFW remittances and export receipts," Bangko Sentral Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

Graduation expenses, tuition

After the seasonal rise in OFW inflows during Christmas, inflows are starting to pick up again in time for the graduation season and in preparation for the payment of tuition for the opening of the academic year in June, dealers said.

"The remittances are for the early graduation expenses," said Marcelo Ayes, chief foreign exchange dealer at Equitable PCI Bank. He said remittances would further rise in April and May for tuition payments for the next schoolyear.

Dealers said strong economic data of late, such as Monday's announcement that the January budget deficit was 26 percent below target, gave a further boost to the peso.

Record international reserves

Remittances and gains from a government bond sale pushed the country's gross international reserves to a record of $20.58 billion at the end of February.

The Bangko Sentral said the level of foreign reserves, compared with $20.48 billion in January, was enough to cover 4.4 months of imports and payments of services.

Because of rosier investment and export prospects, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sees the Philippines sustaining a 5-percent growth in gross domestic product this year and 5.6 percent in the next.

IMF resident representative Reza Baqir yesterday said that the growth outlook for 2006 had factored in the adverse impact of high global oil prices and gains from improved macroeconomic fundamentals due to significant fiscal and financial sector reforms.

But the IMF warned that the country's growth might fall below 5 percent if reforms were to stall and investment to remain subdued due to political turbulence.

"A risk to the near-term outlook for the Philippine economy is that political events, such as possible constitutional change, serve to sideline economic reforms," the IMF executive board said in a report.

"The heavy reliance on external commercial borrowing also puts the Philippines at risk should there be a reversal of the currently benign environment in emerging markets," the report added.

High oil prices

The IMF's 5-percent GDP outlook is lower than the government's minimum target of 5.7 percent but better than the consensus forecast of 4.7 percent, according to Baqir.

In 2005, the Philippine economy grew 5.1 percent, slightly above expectations but lower than the 6-percent expansion in 2004.

A key downside risk to economic output this year, Baqir said, would be the impact of high oil prices, which are expected to push the inflation rate this year to 7.4 percent.

"The direct impact is that it constrains domestic demand and spending and it can also reduce global growth, thus reducing demand for exports," Baqir said.

The IMF said the economic slowdown in 2005 reflected substantially weaker investment and net exports.

"With reforms already being done, we expect a reversal of that. So we expect private investments and exports to pick up," Baqir said.

To move the economy to a higher and more sustained economic growth path, the Philippines must sustain the structural reform momentum, the IMF said.

"This means, first and foremost, realizing promised revenues from the EVAT (expanded value-added tax) and sticking to the fiscal program, achieving the revenue targets for BIR (Bureau of Internal Revenues) and BOC (Bureau of Customs) as well as expenditure targets," Baqir said.

Fitch ratings

The Philippines' below investment grade sovereign ratings could come under pressure in the medium term if the country does not make further progress on fiscal reforms, Fitch Ratings also said.

That was needed particularly since market confidence had been hurt by political worries, Fitch analysts said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo on Friday lifted a weeklong emergency rule she imposed on Feb. 24 after the military said a coup attempt was foiled.

"The Philippines is one country where politics matter," said James McCormack, head of Asia sovereigns, at a conference in Singapore.

"There is a need to maintain market confidence. There needs to be further fiscal improvements or the rating could come under the pressure over the medium term," he said.

Fitch on Feb. 13 raised its outlook on Philippine ratings to stable from negative and affirmed the foreign currency rating at "BB." *With a report from Reuters*

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‘Martial law masquerading as Proclamation No. 1017’

From page A1

the Philippines College of Law.

Pangalangan pointed to statements made by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and police officials that—among other things—warrantless arrests would continue and media personalities were being monitored for possible sedition.

Pangalangan represented UP Prof. Randy David, who was picked up during a march on Feb. 24 to mark the 20th anniversary of the People Power revolution. He was charged with rebellion, but a prosecutor dismissed the case and he was freed.

Vague

The lawyers said the vagueness of the proclamation made it susceptible to “dangerous” interpretations and serious abuse of basic rights enshrined in the Constitution.

“Because of its overbreadth and vagueness, the police may think that all those who ask the President to resign should now be arrested,” said Saguisag, a former human rights lawyer and counsel for ousted President Joseph Estrada.

“It’s thoroughly confusing for lawyers, much more for its implementors,” Saguisag said.

“This is really meant to be a warning against bigger media—ABS-CBN and the Inquirer,” said Saguisag in response to a question on why The Daily Tribune was raided.

Asked by Justice Leonardo Quisumbing how he wanted the court to rule, Pangalangan said the magistrates should issue a “declaration that the (1017) is void .... a statement from the court telling the President not to issue the proclamation again.”

Pangalangan noted that 1017 was handed down even after the high court had ruled that Ms Arroyo’s proclamation of a state of rebellion during the Oakwood mutiny in 2003 “cannot diminish or violate constitutionally protected rights.”

He also observed a “pattern” in Ms Arroyo’s previous moves recalling proclamations when questioned before the Supreme Court.

Pangalangan said the President did the same thing in May 2001 when she declared a state of rebellion to quell an attempt by supporters of former President Joseph Estrada to bring down her government. The court declined to rule on the case, saying it had become academic.

Chilling effect

“It is the third time that the President had issued innocent surpluses ... that cause harm and injury to our protected liberties,” he said in asking the court to finally put a stop to such actions by Ms Arroyo.

Justice Reynato Puno remarked that in the case of Randy David, Proclamation No. 1017 was obviously “viewed differently by the policemen and ... the fiscal.”

Pangalangan said that since the terms of the proclamation were “not being defined, it leaves too much latitude on the implementing authorities.” The application of the law “sweeps too broadly,” he said, causing “a chilling effect.”

He also said that Proclamation No. 1017 actually represented a “circumvention of all the safeguards built on the powers of the Commander in Chief.”

“It is packaging itself as a proclamation when it was more than that,” he said.

A masquerade

With the edict, he said that Ms Arroyo did not only use her power to call on the Armed Forces to prevent and suppress rebellion, but she had actually issued a deliberate order to curtail civil liberties.

“It is an order masquerading as a mere proclamation,” Pangalangan said, adding that PP 1017 is a “half-baked declaration” that is “neither here nor there.”

Saguisag cited several “vague” justifications for 1017. He said that the statement that those who “repeatedly tried to bring down the President” were considered enemies of the state could be subject to different interpretations. He said the President was not the state.

He said the other justification for the emergency proclamation, that media were “recklessly” magnifying the antics, words and actions of alleged conspirators, was another vague provision.

Saguisag asked the court not to consider the matter moot and academic, but to issue a “clear-cut ruling” to give the police and military a clear warning against violations of the people’s right.

Pangalangan said 1017 could actually be martial law in intent and purpose, but the President “held back a little so that it won’t be reviewed by Congress.”

Innocuously worded

He said the Palace could have declared martial law or suspended the writ of habeas corpus, but stopped from doing so because such an act would need a review by Congress.

For him, it was the effect of 1017 on the law enforcers and the public that made the law dangerous and, therefore, unconstitutional.

“It was innocuously worded, but it has the effect of bringing about a chill on those reading it,” he said.

Lawyers for former Sen. Loren Legarda said 1017 effectively restrained her from coming out with details of alleged election fraud against the government in support of her poll protest against Vice President Noli de Castro.

“Our Constitution clearly mandates that no law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression or of the press,” Legarda said.

As a journalist for 33 years, Legarda said she had been affected by the proclamation and General Order No. 5 as she “suffers under a prior restraint to come out with what she believes should be written in her column in the Manila Bulletin or broadcast on her TV show on ABC-5.”

Also yesterday, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said that the Supreme Court had to rule on the validity of 1017.

“Assuming for the sake of argument that the solicitor general is correct and the issue has become academic, still there’s nothing to prevent the Supreme Court from issuing a decision that will guide similar developments in the future. So it would still perform a utilitarian function,” Santiago told reporters.

“I think it’s best in this emergency-prone, martial law-prone country that as many cases as possible should be decided by the Supreme Court on the basis of the constitutional provisions on these developments, on these critical or crisis measures because the public needs to be enlightened before the actual event.”

1017 only a reminder, says solgen

By Leila B. Salaverria

SOLICITOR GENERAL ALFREDO Benipayo late last night said Presidential Proclamation No. 1017 did not confer any new powers on President Macapagal-Arroyo but served only as a reminder that there was a brewing plot to topple her administration and the military must do its job.

Addressing the Supreme Court, Benipayo said the petitioners against the proclamation failed to prove that there was no basis for declaring it or that the President had committed a grave abuse of discretion.

He also said the raid at The Daily Tribune did not stem from Proclamation No. 1017 since the declaration did not authorize the police to seize anything from the newspaper’s offices.

But Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban questioned Benipayo’s defense, saying he appeared to be answering the justices’ questions to please them rather than to defend the government stand. The solicitor general was questioned for over two hours.

“If it did not create a new power, how can it be used by government to quell an attempt at coup d’etat,” Panganiban said.

He said that if Proclamation No. 1017 was meant to protect the state, then Benipayo should have defended the actions arising from it.

“What’s the purpose of 1017? It’s not clear to us,” Panganiban said.

To which Benipayo replied: “I’ve responded that 1017 became necessary, that’s why I listed the events ... and it did not confer any new powers, but she (the President) did alert the people and the military that there is this impending danger so do your job.”

Panganiban said the claim that the national emergency was also declared to protect the economy was not presaged by a statement that the economy was in bad shape.

“Yet the economy is said to be in good shape. Where is the economic emergency there,” he said.

Pacquiao sorry for delaying flight

From page A1

Miguel Corp. products following his spectacular knockout of Mexico’s Erik Morales in January that earned him the nation’s adulation.

Pineda told the Inquirer in a telephone interview that Pacquiao was seeking the “understanding” of the public.

Embarrassed, apologetic

“He was very embarrassed and apologetic when I told him about the news report that came out in the Inquirer. He was not aware that he was the cause of the delay of the flight,” Pineda told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

“He was a little shocked that there was such a complaint against him,” Pineda said, referring to grumbling by PAL employees who had to handle Monday’s incident.

Pineda said he called up Pacquiao yesterday to tell him about the Inquirer report.

Pineda said Pacquiao felt bad that he took the blame for the actions of a member of his entourage, identified as Bernard Cloma, who fixed things for the boxing icon.

“Maybe there was just someone in Manny’s entourage who was too eager to please him. But Manny himself would never impose on an airline,” Pineda said, without naming Cloma.

Pineda said that it would have been all right with Pacquiao if he and his family had been bumped off to the next flight to Hong Kong.

Poetic justice?

According to a well-placed Inquirer source, Cloma insisted that Pacquiao and his family be allowed to take PR 300 to Hong Kong even after a PAL customer service agent informed him that the check-in counters would be closed at 7:45 a.m.

As a result, the fully booked flight took off four minutes behind schedule.

There was also an element of poetic justice in Monday’s incident.

The Inquirer learned that Pacquiao’s and his family’s bags were left behind in their rush to board the aircraft. The luggage had been on “check hold,” meaning these would not be loaded until the passengers were on board.

The bags were put on the subsequent 10 a.m. flight to Hong Kong instead, the source said.

Pineda said Pacquiao was nursing a high fever, which was why he was sluggish and appeared aloof when he arrived at the Naia Centennial Terminal 2.

Moreover, heavy traffic on the way to the airport also put the boxer in a bad mood.

“He just really wanted to push through with the trip because he promised his two young sons that he would take them to Hong Kong Disneyland,” Pineda said.

Knowing Pacquiao, he added, the boxer would have by now confronted Cloma about the complaints of the PAL staff.

Cloma made the arrangements but he was not part of the 20-strong “Team Pacquiao” on the Disneyland sortie, Pineda stressed.

“Manny is still the same person. Fame has not gotten to his head,” Pineda said.

Paternity suit

Pineda did not say if Pacquiao was preoccupied with a date at the Quezon City prosecutor’s office on Monday. He was a no-show, but sent his lawyer instead to deal with a paternity suit filed by a former lover, Joanne Rose Bacosa, 24.

Lawyers say Bacosa is seeking—among other things—a P25-million trust fund for the 2-year-old boy who she claims is the champion’s son from a two-year romantic fling.

Pineda said Pacquiao also plans to speak privately with PAL owner and business tycoon, Lucio Tan, about the incident. Cloma had reportedly dropped Tan’s name in getting Pacquiao on board the plane posthaste.

Friendship with Lucio Tan

“They are good friends and they have a mutual respect for each other. Manny will never take advantage of his friendship with Dr. Tan,” Pineda said.

On Monday, the source said PAL and immigration staff were so annoyed with Pacquiao when he arrived at the Naia without any seeming urgency considering that he and his family were already late for the flight.

The boxing champion also did not appear the least bit apologetic about it, the source said.

The PAL staff was also irritated at Cloma because he kept on insisting that Pacquiao and his family should take the flight despite their tardiness.

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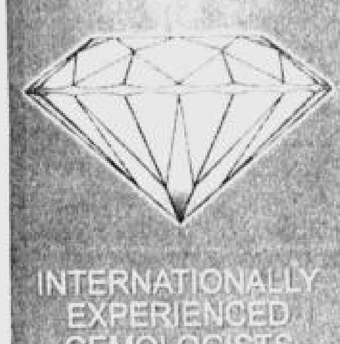

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Section I. Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid
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[Reference No.: PB060213 - EL0017]

1. The National Transmission Corporation, Head Office Region (TRANSCO-HO) through the CY2006 Corporate Budget approved by the TRANSCO Board, intends to apply the sum of Php 5,830,000.00 being the Total Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Supply and Delivery of In-Circuit and Board Test/Electronics Diagnostic Workstation. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The TRANSCO-HO now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for Electronics Diagnostic Workstation. Delivery of the GOODS is required within ninety (90) calendar days from receipt of approved Purchase Order. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders, starting February 28, 2006 to April 4, 2006 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the address below and upon payment of non-refundable fee in the amount of One Thousand Pesos (Php 1,000.00). The method of payment will be CASH. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
5. The TRANSCO-HO will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on March 17, 2006 at 2:00 p.m. at same address below.
6. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before 2:00 p.m. of April 5, 2006. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following form and amount.

Form of Security	Amount
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit (1% of ABC)	Php 58,300.00
2. Bank guarantee (1.5% of ABC)	Php 87,450.00
3. Surety Bond (2.5% of ABC)	Php 145,750.00
4. Foreign government guarantee (100% of ABC)	Php 5,830,000.00

or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted.
7. Bid opening shall be on April 5, 2006 / 2:00 p.m. at the Admin Conference Rm same address below. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.
8. The National Transmission Corporation reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

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Chairman Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI March 1 & 8, 2006)

Singapore offers cheaper transplants

By Christian V. Esguerra

A NEIGHBORING COUNTRY WITH A WELL-established medical tourism program has offered a medical alternative to an expensive and complicated surgery.

Dr. Tan Kai Chah of the Asian Center for Liver Disease and Transplantation said that a medical procedure called living donor living transplant (LDLT), which was not available in the Philippines, was being offered in Singapore.

"LDLT is not being performed in the Philippines owing to the lack of expertise and facilities, being a very complicated procedure," according to Tan, a surgeon at the Gleneagles Hospital, where the center is located.

"As a consequence, many Filipinos who suffer from end-stage liver diseases have no choice but to seek treatment overseas, mainly in the US."

Tan claimed that Singapore was a "cheaper and practical alternative," noting that securing a visa and other entry requirements to the United States posed problems for both patients and donors.

A transplant costs $400,000 (P20.5 million) in the US while it only costs 260,000 Singapore dollars (P8.2 million) in his country, the doctor said.

Tan, a specialist in liver transplantations, briefed reporters on Monday on the benefits of having LDLT procedure done in Singapore during a break at the 16th Asian Pacific Association for the Study of the Liver at the Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong City.

According to a paper distributed among reporters, Tan has performed more than 800 liver transplant operations in the United Kingdom alone.

Customs burns rotten cherries

By Nikko Dizon

SOME 2.6 TONS OF rotten cherries, worth an estimated P2 million, were burned yesterday by the Department of Agriculture-Plant Quarantine Services (DA-PQS).

Incinerated at the quarantine area in Nayong Pilipino compound were 512 cartons of the fruit that were already pruned and reeking.

The cargo originated from Chile and arrived in Manila on Dec. 23 last year via Philippine Airlines (PAL) with Green River Trading as its claimant.

The cargo was seized by the Bureau of Customs at the airport cargo warehouse because the shipment violated several provisions in the 1989 Philippines-Chile Memorandum of Agreement on Exportation/Importation of Fruits, according to PQS chief Alberto Ramos.

Ramos said that according to the agreement, any fruit shipment from the Philippines to Chile and vice versa should be a "direct importation or exportation" and the seals should be broken only upon arrival in the ports.

In this case, the shipment passed through the United States and the seals were already broken, Ramos explained.

"There was a danger of infestation," he said.

According to Ramos, there are Mediterranean fruit flies in the United States, which the Philippines does not have.

Moreover, it was discovered on the labels on the cartons that the shipment was bound for Taiwan, not Manila, Ramos added.

Ramos said the turnover of the shipment from customs to the PQS was delayed because of the change in top BOC officials in January.

This ultimately delayed the PQS incineration of the fruit, he said.

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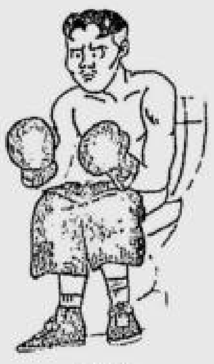

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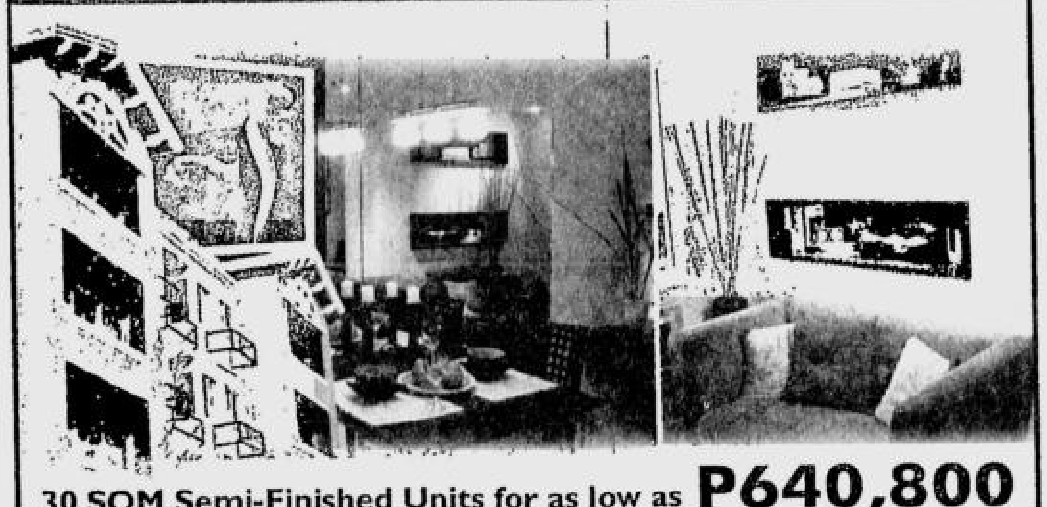

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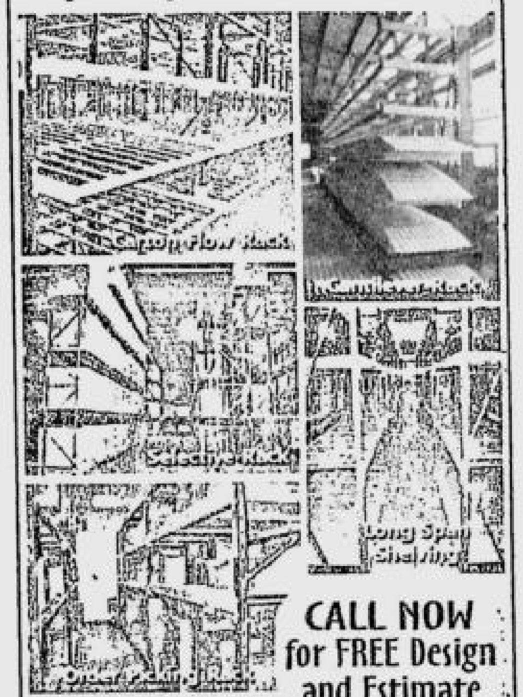

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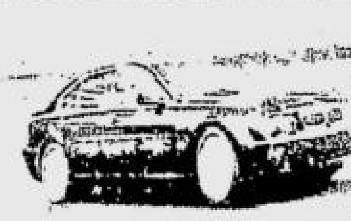

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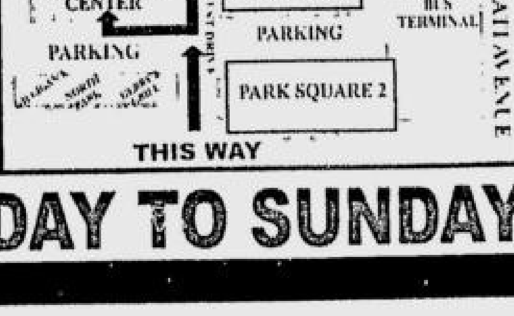

OPEN MONDAY TO SUNDAY

The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Police general wants Thaksin to quit

BANGKOK—THAILAND'S NATIONAL POLICE spokesperson said Tuesday that he personally believes the only way to resolve the country's deepening political crisis is for Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to resign.

In a rare departure from the police force's official impartiality, Gen. Archirawit Suphanaphesat told reporters he had sent a personal letter to Thaksin "urging him not to resume the premiership" even if his Thai Rak Thai party wins a majority in elections next month.

Thaksin, however, insisted Tuesday he would never bow to antigovernment protesters and abandon the rural poor who voted him into power, setting up a showdown with the widening opposition.

Protesters trying to oust Thaksin, an avowed nationalist, before April 2 snap elections said they will rally every night and extend their demonstrations to symbolic venues, including the Thai stock exchange and the Singapore Embassy.

The anti-Thaksin campaign swelled last month after the prime minister's family sold its controlling stake in telecom giant Shin Corp. to a Singapore state-owned investment company, netting 73.3 billion baht (US$1.9 billion).

Critics allege the sale involved insider trading and tax dodges and complain that a key national asset is now in the hands of a foreign government.

A large rally is planned for next Tuesday outside Government House, the prime minister's offices, to coincide with the weekly Cabinet meeting.

Labor unions representing state-owned utilities and rail workers announced plans to join protests later this week and have threatened partial strikes, joining rallies that until now mainly attracted the urban middle class.

"The protests are a test to see who can tolerate it longer. I am confident we will win," said Chamlong Srimuang, a protest leader who was a longtime adviser to Thaksin and is now one of his most powerful opponents.

"I am confident Thaksin will resign before April 2," Chamlong said.

More than 10,000 people gathered Monday night at Bangkok's Sanam Luang park, accusing Thaksin of corruption and abuse of power. A night earlier a crowd estimated by police at about 100,000 filled the streets around Government House and stayed until well past midnight.

Thaksin has made daily statements that he will not be cowed by the growing protests.

"I will never, ever bow to mob rule," Thaksin told reporters Tuesday. *AP*

Bird flu spreads to Poland, infects cat in Austria

WARSAW—AVIAN FLU EXTENDED ITS spread across Europe as Poland confirmed on Monday that two dead swans had the virulent H5N1 virus and Austria reported a cat at an animal sanctuary tested positive for the virus.

Experts from the World Health Organization (WHO), meeting in Geneva, said the spread of bird flu was unprecedented and the threat of a human pandemic would not go away.

China said on Sunday the H5N1 virus had killed a man in southern Guangdong province, which borders Hong Kong. There had been no reported outbreaks in birds in the area where he died and experts in Hong Kong urged authorities to find the source.

The man was the 95th person killed by bird flu since late 2003, the WHO said. The virus remains essentially an animal disease which humans contract through close contact with infected birds.

However, the virus is mutating and there are fears it may eventually change enough to be transmitted easily from human to human.

The virus is currently spreading rapidly among wild birds and has reached at least 15 new countries over the past month, moving across Europe and also hitting Egypt and West Africa.

A cat in an animal sanctuary in southern Austria has tested positive for H5N1 but had not shown any symptoms of the disease, Austria's health minister said on Monday.

The cat was among 170 cats kept in cages next to birds including a swan that died of the disease and chicken and ducks found to have the virus after they were culled last month, Health Minister Maria Rauch-Kallat told a news conference.

Animals carrying H5N1 without showing any signs of ill health could make it harder to detect and contain bird flu. The longer the virus remains in a mammal, the greater too the risk of it mutating into a more dangerous form. *Reuters*

Human beings still evolving, say researchers

PROVIDING THE STRONGEST EVIDENCE yet that human beings are still evolving, researchers have detected some 700 regions of the human genome where genes appear to have been reshaped by natural selection, a principal force of evolution, within the last 5,000 to 15,000 years.

The genes that show this evolutionary change include some responsible for the senses of taste and smell, digestion, bone structure, skin color and brain function.

Many of these instances of selection may reflect the pressures that came to bear as people abandoned hunting and gathering for settlements and agriculture, a transition well under way in Europe and East Asia some 5,000 years ago.

Under natural selection, beneficial genes become more common in a population as their owners have more progeny.

Three populations were studied, Africans, East Asians and Europeans. In each, a mostly different set of genes had been favored by natural selection. The study may help anthropologists explain why people over the world have a such a variety of distinctive appearances, even though their genes are on the whole very similar, said Spencer Wells, director of the Genographic project of the National Geographic Society.

The finding adds substantially to the evidence that human evolution did not halt in the distant past, as is tacitly assumed by many social scientists. Even evolutionary psychologists, who interpret human behavior in terms of what the brain evolved to do, hold that the work of natural selection in shaping the human mind was completed in the pre-agricultural past, more than 10,000 years ago. *New York Times Service*

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USHERING LENT

Participants of the colorful flour-war dance and drink during the celebrations of Clean Monday, which marks the end of carnival and the start of Lent in the town of Galaxidi, March 6. AFP

Hamas leader vows armed struggle vs Israel

DUBAI—THE SUPREMO OF PALESTINIAN radical group Hamas vowed Monday to continue armed struggle against Israel and declared that the Palestinian Authority had accomplished nothing by recognizing the Jewish state.

"The demand that Hamas and the resistance movements lay down their weapons and become political parties is unrealistic and has nothing to do with the Palestinian reality on the ground," said Meshaal in an interview broadcast on Dubai-based Arab news channel Al-Arabiya after the end of his landmark visit to Moscow Sunday.

"This is why we are determined to hold on to our choices which are resisting and defending our people with the modest arms that we have while opting for peaceful politics to reorganize the internal Palestinian order." Meshaal made clear his group, which has carried out dozens of attacks against Israel, had no plans to compromise its militancy in the face of diplomatic pressure.

"We told Russian officials and we tell the whole world now, the solution is not in recognizing Israel, it is in ending the occupation," said the Damascus-based Meshaal.

"How can we the victims recognize the jailer, the killer and the occupier and did those that recognized Israel in the past accomplish anything? Arab countries and the Palestinian Authority recognized it and the result was that nothing changed."

Later in Damascus, Meshaal sounded a more flexible tone concerning Israel.

"We want to treat this (new) situation with a new spirit," he said, addressing a conference of Arab political parties.

"We want to prevent the spilling of blood.

"If Israel declares war on us, we are ready for war with this country. If they want peace, they must leave the occupied Palestinian territories." Hamas has given numerous statements in recent weeks on its intentions toward Israel. But its statements vary from aggressive militancy to a more reasoned approach as the group prepares to take the government's reins of power.

French President Jacques Chirac reiterated on Monday during a three-day visit to Riyadh demands made by the Quartet—grouping the European Union, Russia, the United Nations and the United States—that Hamas must renounce violence and recognize Israel's right to exist.

Hamas, which scored a shock victory in January's legislative elections, is in the process of forming a new Palestinian government.

Meshaal, who was also interviewed by Qatar-based Al-Jazeera, was asked about Russian pressure on Hamas to respect the Quartet's roadmap for a two-state solution to the Mideast conflict.

"How can Hamas be asked to adopt an initiative that was abandoned by its sponsors and that does not exist any more. What we have now is a unilateral disengagement plan," he told Al-Jazeera.

He said the roadmap died last summer when the US administration agreed to Israel's unilateral pullout from the Gaza Strip. Meshaal warned that Acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was set to repeat the feat in the West Bank. *AFP*

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Annan seeks shake-up of UN management

UNITED NATIONS—SECRETARY-GENERAL Kofi Annan is proposing a shakeup of UN management practices that would create a mobile civil service, allow a one-time staff buyout costing about US$100,000 per person, modernize technology, and consider outsourcing.

The proposal, to be unveiled Tuesday, is a response to last year's investigation into the UN oil-for-food program which concluded that shoddy management was partly to blame for widespread corruption. It is also an effort to transform the UN's post-World War II management structure and practices so the world body can deal with 21st century problems.

The United States has been pushing for a major management overhaul that would give the secretary-general more power and flexibility. But the 191-member General Assembly, dominated by developing countries, controls the UN's purse strings and is not expected to give up any power easily.

"I think this is a report that we know will create a stronger and more effective United Nations," UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said Monday, "and I think everyone has a stake in that."

According to an outline of the proposed reforms obtained by The Associated Press, Annan will seek approval from member states to reorganize the UN's top ranks and give day-to-day responsibility for the UN's management to the deputy secretary-general, a position that was created in 1997 but has no statutory authority. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Britain sets Iraq troop pullout

LONDON—Britain will pull most of its troops from Iraq by the middle of 2008 under a phased withdrawal that could begin within months, Britain's top army officer there said in an interview published Tuesday. Lt. General Nick Houghton, quoted by The Daily Telegraph, said the army plans to go ahead with such a withdrawal because it is confident it can be replaced by Iraq's newly trained 225,000 soldiers and police officers. More than 8,000 British troops are currently deployed in Iraq. *AFP*

Port takeover clears final hurdle

LONDON—The takeover of British port operator P and O by Dubai Ports World became definitive here Monday when the Court of Appeal denied permission to a US company to challenge an earlier court ruling authorizing the acquisition. Monday's unanimous decision by the three-judge panel targeted the Florida-based firm Eller Company. P and O acknowledged the appeal ruling and said its sale to DP World would now proceed. The Eller Company had gone to London's High Court last week to block the takeover, arguing that the transaction would flout a joint venture deal it had with a subsidiary of P and O in the port of Miami. But the High Court last Thursday approved the takeover of the Peninsula and Oriental Steam Navigation Company by DP World, prompting a move by Eller to appeal. *AFP*

Ex-Milosevic ally kills self

THE HAGUE—Former Croatian Serb leader Milan Babic, who pleaded guilty to crimes against humanity during the war in Croatia, committed suicide in the detention center of the UN war crimes court in The Hague, the court said Monday. "The detention unit medical officer confirmed Milan Babics death shortly after his body was found," it said. He killed himself on Sunday. "The Dutch authorities were called immediately. After conducting an investigation, they confirmed that the cause of death was suicide." The president of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Italian judge Fausto Pocar, has ordered an internal inquiry, the court added. According the unconfirmed reports the former Croatian Serb leader hanged himself. *AFP*

Uzbek leader gets jail term

TASHKENT—The head of Uzbekistan's main opposition movement was sentenced to more than 10 years in prison on Monday for economic crimes, a judge announced, after a trial seen by rights groups as politically motivated. Sanjar Umarov "headed an organized criminal group and also created several offshore companies to commit economic crimes," Judge Zokirjon Isayev said in announcing the guilty verdict and sentence. Umarov had condemned the violent suppression by Uzbek security forces of an uprising last year and was a rare high-profile critic of the government in this tightly-controlled Central Asian state. Umarov's lawyer immediately announced plans to appeal the sentence. *AFP*

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2006

ISSN 0116-2642 INQUIRER Vol. 21 No. 90

Email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph website: http://www.inq7.net

OPINION

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THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, INC. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 / 528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.

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Millions of reasons

EDITORIAL

THERE ARE MILLIONS OF REASONS PEOPLE CAN give to defend and attack the funds lavished by former President Joseph Estrada on the military. But to do so evades the essential questions such generous gift-giving should raise.

The first, of course, is why the Estradas thought it necessary to give assistance to the military. The second is why the military thought it was all right to accept millions of pesos in "donations." The third is why the government only found out about the activities of the Saludo sa Kawal Pilipino Foundation after the fact—and seems rather uneasy about really probing deep into the gift-giving, much less getting the money back.

We've often heard there's no such thing as a free lunch, which doesn't mean, of course, that those who are hungry won't gratefully accept a complimentary lunch. The entire career of Estrada has been built on the public-relations benefits that generous gift-giving endows on a politician; and he has, time and again, shown himself capable of calling in past favors when the need arises.

For that reason, to this day, former San Juan residents he relocated to public housing projects in Pasig City receive truckloads of free food on his birthday and that keeps them fanatically loyal and devoted to him. For the same reason, when he was commander in chief, Estrada ensured that confiscated smuggled cigarettes were distributed to the soldiers in the field, earning him their good will and affection. And for the same reason, neither local nor national government officials consider it necessary to actually deliver government services, when personal favors of this nature will do.

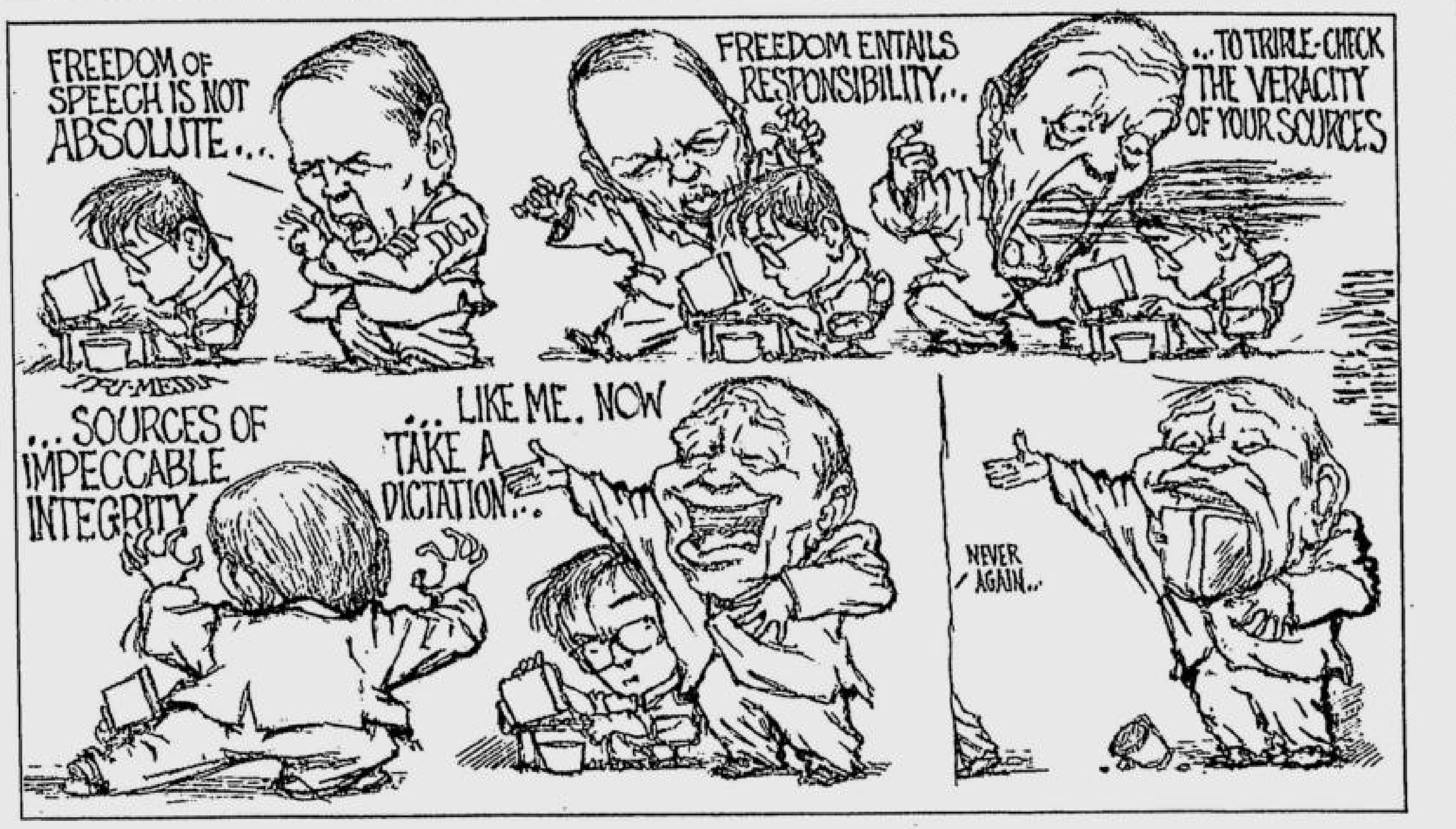
That military men, ranging from Marine Col. Ariel Querubin and all the others who did not only accept but actively solicited donations from Estrada, reveal a dangerous naiveté. Still their readiness to solicit such material help also serves as a damning indictment of government's inability to address the needs of the military rank and file. Even as President Macapagal-Arroyo has been making promises, Estrada has been distributing money to the Armed Forces and units such as the Scout Rangers and the Marines. Although this cannot be justified, it helps explain why the crème de la crème of our Armed Forces are more likely to go against their commander in chief than to defend her. For even a disgraced commander in chief seems to care more and do more for them.

Estrada can claim all he likes that his being in a position to create the most mischief and reap the most immediate rewards from military unrest were all an unfair coincidence. He and his family are the first to belie suggestions that his generosity comes with strings attached. And it is true that as of now, there is no hard evidence to suggest that the military men who solicited and received donations from Estrada had anything beyond the immediate material needs of their impoverished troops in mind. But the fact that Estrada associates went around volunteering donations to the military and ensuring that the amounts given would favorably impress would suggest ulterior motives. Loyalty and good will can be bought—all it requires is for even the honest to refuse to believe that they're being bought.

Still, government has its own accounting to do. A military reduced to thinking of itself as an institutional charity case will engage in any mendicant behavior so long as it lacks faith in the capacity of institutions to address its needs. The needs, no one should forget, are legitimate—and such needs are compounded by what is perceived not only by soldiers, but also civilians, as corruption at the top siphoning off public funds.

There isn't even the consolation of seeing government go after Estrada double-time to undo whatever damage he has done to the military and to society. The administration seems not only loath to crack the whip on him but actually continues to coddle him. Up to now, Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor and Local Government Secretary Ronaldo Puno need only the slightest excuse to rush to Estrada's side and try to humor him.

Neither can the administration be very aggressive in throwing the book at military officers, who will probably claim they simply had a "lapse in judgment" while pointing to the one who popularized the phrase. And they know the government has become hostage to its own sense of insecurity.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Why doesn't LP Atienza Wing just join Kampi?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

WHILE THE NATION'S ATTENTION WAS FOcused on the alleged coup plot of the Left, the Right and everything else in between, against President Macapagal-Arroyo, the pro-GMA faction of the Liberal Party was hatching a coup of its own. It carried this out before the weekend and ousted its president, Sen. Franklin Drilon, and all the other big stars of the LP (including Sen. Mar Roxas, grandson of the founder of the LP) who are the top officials of the party. The rout was total; the top brass didn't know what hit them.

What hit them was a well-orchestrated plot that turned a supposedly innocuous seminar on local government into a party convention and election wherein several top Cabinet officials of GMA (led by her chief of staff, presidential legal counsel and former chief of staff) captured the top positions. Moments after the elections, GMA, as if on cue, arrived at the Manila Hotel grinning from ear to ear like the cat that ate the canary, shaking hands and being congratulated everywhere as if she herself plotted the coup and was elected president of the party as her reward (it was Manila Mayor Lito Atienza who was elected president).

The coup was particularly humiliating to its victims, the group of Drilon, as it was accomplished with the aid of (in the words of Drilon himself) "mere Manila barangay officials and City Hall employees."

Perhaps it is written in the stars that the LP would suffer another one of its divisions that periodically hits it. It seems that the party is the roost of rebels.

If I remember my history right, the LP was founded by Manuel Roxas as a splinter of the Nacionalista Party of Manuel Quezon and Sergio Osmeña Sr. Roxas defeated Osmeña for the presidency. The LP had two more party members elected president: Elpidio Quirino and Diosdado Macapagal. Two more LP members—Ramon Magsaysay and Ferdinand Marcos—left the party to become guest presidential candidates of the Nacionalista Party.

In two more presidential elections, the LP was split into two: the Avelino Wing and the Quirino Wing, and later into the Salonga Wing and the Kalaw Wing. Now it is again split into the Drilon Wing and the Atienza Wing.

With so many wings, you would think that the party should be able to soar to the heavens but it remains earthbound, closer to the underworld, because of the clashing ambitions of its leaders.

The present intramurals are really a prelude to next year's elections and, beyond that, to the presidential elections of 2010. Right now, the LP has at least three presidential hopefuls: Roxas and Drilon and the upstart Atienza. If he is able to help GMA survive until 2010, Atienza hopes to be anointed by her as the administration candidate, hence the attempt to oust both Drilon and Roxas from the LP. The latter two, on the other hand, believe that their chances in 2010 (assuming there would be presidential elections then) hinge on their remaining in the opposition. They believe that being on GMA's side would be the kiss of death to their own ambitions.

The respected grand old man of the party, former Senate President Jovito Salonga, has offered to mediate the dispute between the two factions, provided Atienza stops being a tool of GMA and Drilon does not legitimize the Commission on Elections by asking it to decide which is the legitimate LP.

I don't see how Salonga can reconcile the two. They are like oil and water. Drilon et al. will never support GMA, and Atienza will never leave her. In the first place, his faction has already been coopted by GMA. Its new officers are her Cabinet members and key allies in the House and LGUs. They are as good as members of her Kampi. All that is lacking is for them to take their oaths as Kampi members.

On the other hand, the Drilon Wing is showing why it became a sucker for the coup: It was slow in acting. And it deludes itself into believing that the two wings can still unite into a single bird.

It said it will consider the Atienza Wing "resigned" from the party. Too soft. Why not just expel them and be rid of them? They're lost to the LP as opposition party. They are already running with the GMA pack. They have already expelled themselves, anyway. No way can you make it rejoin the Drilon Wing. How can you make Defensor, Nachura, Tiglao et al. join a party that opposes GMA? Tell me, how can even Salonga make them do that?

Unless, of course, Drilon, Roxas et al. decide to support GMA for the sake of keeping the LP united. But I don't think that is going to happen, or I am a very bad judge of character.

It's none of my business, but I think the LP can resign itself into having two more wings, unless the Atienza Wing decides to be honest and formally joins Kampi.

* * *

INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE: It is not only former Sen. Vicente Paterno, a member of the Consultative Commission, who is disowning both the ConCom and the new Charter that it drafted. The whole University of the Philippines community is planning to disown its former president, Jose P. Abueva, chair of the ConCom. UP students and alumni are talking about disowning Abueva for allowing himself to be used by the administration by accepting the chairmanship of the GMA-created ConCom, "thus bringing dishonor to the university and its alumni, faculty and students."

This is not without precedent. If you recall, the University of Sto. Tomas disowned former Chief Justice Andres Narvasa when he agreed to be a member of the defense panel of then President Joseph Estrada in the plunder case against him.

Revenge of the 'trapos'

(Conclusion)

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

SINCE 1992, A PHENOMENON HAS TAKEN place in Philippine politics. That is the invasion of the entertainers, a general category of people including movie and television stars, singers, basketball players and people in media.

Curiously, the one who heralded that phenomenon was no entertainer at all. Miriam Santiago, who led a ragtag party, nearly won the 1992 elections. Santiago was not an entertainer but she had the support of a major newspaper which turned her every utterance into headlines. Her unprecedented success there was not lost on people who naturally bathed in the glare of media—the movie stars, the basketball players, the people in media themselves.

Before you could say "Lights, camera, action!" every entertainer, major or not, was entertaining hopes of a career in politics. GMA herself, who would later thumb her nose at FPJ, took the route big-time. In the 1992 elections, she barely clung to the winners' circle, but in 1995 she was first. The dramatic turn owed to her redoing her image from economist to the "Nora Aunor of Philippine politics" in movie-style calendars and posters that featured her in movie-style poses.

Suddenly, party resources and bailiwicks meant nothing, popularity meant everything. That was so in national elections at least since local elections remained *trapo* turf. Easy to see why: You can control and buy off a small territory, you can't a huge one. Parties themselves began ardently courting entertainers into their ranks.

The phenomenon culminated in Joseph Estrada winning the presidency. Indeed, not just winning it, but leaving Jose de Venecia choking in his dust. I think that was the time Joe de V vowed to see the day when he would plant a foot on the armor of the fallen Entertainer, sword at his throat, and shout his victory to the heavens.

That day came with Edsa II. Or at least, as I said yesterday, Edsa II opened the floodgates to defeating the entertainers not by vote but by force. The *trapos* prepared the public itself to accept it. The post-Edsa scene brought in its train an earnest *trapo* campaign warning the world about the evils of entertainers acquiring power, as evidenced by the fallen Erap. The *trapos*, of course, never warned the same thing about themselves.

The warning wasn't lost on the middle class, the bulwark of Edsa I and II, which truly believed anyone was a better alternative to an Erap or his political look-alike. The extent to which that would be believed, and psychologically enforced, would be astoundingly evident after the Garci scandal last year. Letter writers in newspapers openly articulated the attitude in terms of: "So GMA cheated, so what? Good for her, good for us. She prevented a worse crime from being committed, which is FPJ becoming president."

Quite apart from preparing the public for it, the *trapos* moved to steal the elections, confident they would never really get any serious challenge. In fact, they not only did not get any serious challenge, they got help from many of the Edsa forces. The latter endorsed GMA as the lesser evil to FPJ, proclaimed the elections as generally clean and railroaded her proclamation in the Senate by throwing out all complaints about electoral fraud.

What all this says is that it isn't solely the innate corruptibility of the Filipino that has made him prey to GMA's wile and guile. It is also the perception of self-interest. The *trapos* are desperate to support GMA, not because they like her—who can?; at least Marcos had people who liked him personally—but because that is where their self-interest lies. They would like nothing better than to obliterate their greatest scourge which is the Entertainer.

That is now being pushed with even more single-minded fury. Congress didn't just kill the impeachment bid last year, it consolidated ranks to defeat once and for all any threat to *trapo* authority. That was led by the *trapo*-est of *trapos* in this country, chief of them Jose de Venecia. Since then De Venecia—along with Fidel Ramos, who too has developed a talent for opportunism, the supreme mark of the *trapo*—has been pushing for Charter change. That is so not because they like the parliamentary system but because they do not like the presidential one. The presidential system has become entertainer turf, the parliamentary system supreme *trapo* turf.

But the best laid plans of mice and men oft go astray, as Shakespeare said. The fly in the ointment is GMA herself, who has become the greatest—or worst—*trapo* in this country and who is not about to give up power to anyone of them. The logical extreme of the reign of entertainers is silliness, the logical extreme of the reign of *trapos* is dictatorship. Eventually *trapo* politics births someone like Marcos or GMA who is determined to rule forever and will go to any extent to do so. GMA has already launched her trial balloon, mounting de facto martial law at a provocation infinitely less than anything Cory experienced in her time.

No, *trapos* are not the lesser evil to entertainers, entertainers are far, far the lesser evil to *trapos*. Entertainers can only stop being entertaining, *trapos* can be fascistic. Entertainers can only drag the country to a farce, *trapos* can drag the country to hell.

But truly we are a pathetic people if we can think only in terms of picking the "lesser evil." The absolute good is everywhere around us, if we would only have the eyes to see it, if only we stopped believing that lying, cheating and stealing are a lesser evil to anything. The point is not to choose between entertainers and *trapos*, the point is to go past them to find, or discover, or birth a new breed of politicians.

The *trapos* have had their revenge. It's time we, the citizens, did, too.

Dictators come and go

COMMENTARY

Belinda A. Aquino

HONOLULU—IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN FOR David Wallechinsky's annual list of the world's 10 worst living dictators. His latest list draws from various reports of organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders.

A "dictator" is defined as a "head of state who exercises arbitrary authority over the lives of his citizens and who cannot be removed from power through legal means." Our Filipino contribution to this "Hall of Shame," was, of course, Ferdinand Marcos, who was removed by extra-legal People Power 20 years ago.

The top three among the 2006 "Scoundrels of the Earth" are the same as last year's, but two—Moammar Gadhafi of Libya and Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan—have slipped out of the cursed circle, "not because their conduct has improved but because other dictators have gotten worse." The worst three are: Omar al-Bashir, 62, of Sudan; Kim Jong-il, 63, of North Korea; and Than Shwe, 72, of Burma. Al-Bashir has been in power since 1989, Kim Jong-il since 1994, and Shwe since 1992.

The Sudanese dictator has been in the news since 2003 when his ethnic cleansing campaign began, killing at least 180,000 civilians in Darfur, western Sudan, and displacing an estimated 2 million Sudanese from their homes. His men have routinely burned villages until there are no longer any villages to burn. The attacks have reportedly gravitated to the refugee camps.

Kim Jong-il still leads the world's most tightly controlled society, which has been in the news because of concern about its nuclear weapons program. An estimated 250,000 people are still in "re-education camps." Malnourishment is endemic. It is believed that a 7-year-old North Korean boy is 8 inches shorter and 20 pounds lighter than his South Korean counterpart.

Burma's strongman Shwe relocated his country's capital from Rangoon to Pyinmana, a remote area, giving civil servants only two days' notice. Worse, they were forbidden from resigning. Burma tops the world in terms of using children as soldiers and forced labor on construction projects. Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi is still under house arrest.

Last year's No. 9 has "graduated" to No. 4. Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, 81, in power since 1980, has gone "from bad to worse." Unemployment has risen to 80 percent, and the AIDS rate to 20 percent. Inflation in Zimbabwe is the highest in the world. Mugabe launched the "Clean the Filth" project, evicting some 700,000 Zimbabweans to prevent them from demonstrating as the economy deteriorates.

Only No. 15 in last year's ranking, Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov, 67, is this year's No. 5. Quite a "promotion," and that's because on May 13, 2005, he ordered a mass killing in Andijan, in which scores of men, women and children, who had gathered in the town square to air their grievances, were massacred. A 2003 law made Karimov and his family immune from prosecution "forever."

China's Hu Jintao, 63, and last year's No. 4, improved to become No. 6 in the 2006 listing. At least an estimated 250,000 political dissidents are believed to be still in re-education camps. The government censors mail and monitors phone calls, fax, e-mail and text messages. In preparation for the 2008 Olympics, about 400,000 Beijing residents have been reported evicted.

Also in a better position at No. 7 is King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, 82, last year's No. 5. According to Amnesty International, police routinely use torture to extract "confessions." Phone calls are recorded and phones with cameras are banned. Public employees cannot "engage in dialogue with local and foreign media." Women must cover their faces and bodies in public. They cannot drive and must not appear in public with men who are not their relatives.

Turkmenistan's Saparmurat Niyazov, 65, has retained his No. 8 ranking. He is said to have created the "most pervasive personality cult," which includes ordering his country's doctors not to swear to the Hippocratic Oath but to him instead. He has whimsically banned such things as lip-synching and playing recorded music on TV or during wedding ceremonies. He is also reported to have replaced 15,000 health care workers with untrained military conscripts.

A newcomer is No. 9 Seyed Ali Khamanei, 66, of Iran, who was only No. 18 last year. Though Iran held a presidential election in 2005, the country is really run by a 12-man Guardian Council overseen by the Ayatollah Khamanei. He has reportedly ordered the shutting down of the free press, the torture of journalists and the execution of homosexual men. The council has the right to veto any law that the elected government passes.

Finally, Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguema, 63, also retains his ranking at No. 10. Investigation is usually done by torture. There is no freedom of speech and the only private radio station is owned by Obiang's son. Most of the people live on less than $1 a day, and after major oil reserves were discovered in 1995, Obiang has reportedly siphoned off $700 million into special US bank accounts. Among the top 10, Obiang, who seized power in 1979 from his uncle, has been dictator for the longest time.

Dictators never die. Some have faded but others have taken their place. As grim as it sounds, this world will probably not be rid of dictators, even in the long run.

Belinda A. Aquino is professor of Political Science and Asian Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa where she is also director of the Center for Philippine Studies.

'Mabuti pa si Rustom…'

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

"*MABUTI PA SI RUSTOM, NAGSASABI NG TOTOO!* (At least Rustom tells the truth!)" is a new anti-GMA slogan jokingly fashioned by tipsy participants at a recent party thrown for Australia-bound APO Jim Paredes by pagbabago@pilipinas.

The "slogan" is based on the televised "confession" of sometime matinee idol and romantic lead Rustom Padilla, who came home from the United States a couple of years ago with hair dyed blond, physique alarmingly diminished, and questions (even then) about his sexuality hovering about his person.

By the time Padilla made his tearful revelation on the set of the reality show "Pinoy Big Brother," it was truly somewhat of an anti-climax, since his sexual orientation was one of local show-biz's biggest and most open secrets. Indeed, it seems as if the entire nation had known about Padilla's being gay, save perhaps for Keanna Reeves, his "confessor."

Someone even reflected that the generally favorable reaction to Rustom's confession, with people praising him generously for his "honesty," can only mean that "the Filipino people are thirsty for the truth," be it about an actor's sexuality or a President's complicity in electoral fraud.

Tongue-in-cheek, another party-goer suggested to all the anti-GMA folk present that perhaps they should start an underhanded campaign to get Keanna Reeves appointed to the Arroyo Cabinet. "If your rallies and investigations can't get her to tell the truth, maybe Keanna will!"

* * *

BUT moving on…

There have been letters circulating through the e-mail circuit purporting to come from "members of the middle-class" and addressed to former President Cory Aquino, members of the opposition, military adventurists, the Hyatt 10 and all other anti-GMA groups calling for the President's resignation. In essence, the letters express their authors' disgust at all the "destabilization" moves and the constant rallies and demonstrations that create an unfavorable image for the country and thus supposedly threaten our fragile economy.

"People Power" has lost its magic, the letters declare, and "the silent majority" are not only unconvinced about the charges being leveled against the President, but also fatigued and sick and tired of getting angry and feeling let down by our leaders.

There's been some speculation that the missives from the middle-class may have been actually artful propaganda produced by the psy-ops experts in Malacañang. But I'm willing to give them the benefit of the doubt, and believe they may indeed be reflecting honest and deeply felt frustrations of the thinning ranks of the country's bourgeoisie. Lord knows I've heard as much from friends and relatives.

Also by e-mail comes this retort, not from an anonymous letter-sender but from Vicente "Enteng" Romano of the anti-GMA Black-and-White Movement. I'm reprinting excerpts here, in hopes of provoking discussion, if not reflection.

* * *

"YOU tell us to stop the protests, because you have no intention of coming out to the streets and therefore People Power will fail," writes Romano. "You may be right—People Power could fail. But that should not give you comfort, for it only opens up other forms of revolt—a peasant revolution, a military rebellion or a communist takeover. When you have more than half of the people living in abject poverty, a restive military and an oppressive regime—it's a social volcano just waiting to erupt. And this time, it could be bloody."

Addressing accusations that more "moderate" groups are allowing themselves to be used by the Erap forces and communist groups, Romano says that "we are not as naïve as you think."

"We recognize that it is Erap's right to dream of one day regaining his lost glory just as it is the leftists' right to push their ideology within the bounds of law," he adds. "In the same manner, we recognize it is your right to express your willingness for your basic rights and freedom to be curtailed or to settle for a President who is a cheat, a thief and an oppressor. We may not agree with any of you, but we do not get angry like you do, when people espouse views different from ours. Such is the way of democracy. It is the same democracy that gives us the right to think of you as the bigger fools, for allowing yourselves to be used by GMA to prop up her repressive regime.

"And now that you have finally decided to speak up, you claim to represent the silent majority. Where did you get this idea? The majority could be silent, but they do not necessarily share your sentiments. At least when we claim that 80 percent of our people believe GMA cheated and 54 percent want her out, we have the surveys to back our claims. Whether or not they will act on what they believe in is another story. Soon… you will discover, as we have, that this nation is hopelessly divided. And that is how GMA intends to keep it in order to cling on to power."

* * *

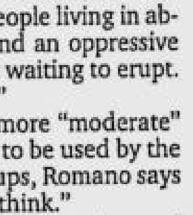
"PINAY in Action," a series of sports activities being launched in observance of Women's Month, gets off to a "running" start tomorrow, March 9, with Run Clinics at the Taguig Public High School, with some 200 girls participating, and at the Muntinlupa Public High School, also with 200 girls participating. On Friday, March 10, another Run Clinic will be held at the San Jose (Quezon City) Public High School.

"Pinay in Action's" main event, though, is the "All Women's" 5 km/10 km Walk/Run on Sunday, March 19, at 6 a.m. at the Bonifacio Global City. Participants can pre-register by logging on to www.cayetanofoundation.com, or sending e-mail to bikeforhope@yahoo.com.

"Pinay in Action" is being held in cooperation with the Compañero Rene Cayetano Foundation and Team David's Salon, the first Filipino all-women's multi-sport team. For inquiries, call Ani de Leon at 0915-444-0290.

Standoff at the cathedral

LOOKING BACK



Ambeth R. Ocampo

THE CLASH BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE in 1635 regarding the right of sanctuary reminds us that truth can sometimes be stranger than fiction and that the events recounted in last Friday's column could be used for a movie.

When Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera, governor general of the Philippines, ignored the right of sanctuary invoked by a criminal hiding in San Agustin and had him arrested and executed in the courtyard of the church, a clash with Hernando Guerrero, archbishop of Manila, was inevitable. There was a series of irritants between them that we will not detail here because the outcome of all this has to be recounted here as documented in Volume 26 of "Blair and Robertson."

Guerrero used up his arsenal of ecclesiastical weapons, including excommunication and even a temporary stop to religious ceremonies in Manila, to get his way, thinking that it would move Hurtado. But the governor general ordered that he be arrested and exiled to Mariveles on the night of Friday, May 9, 1635. At 8 p.m., Guerrero put on his episcopal robes, stood by his episcopal chair and waited for arrest with a "secret weapon": the Blessed Sacrament. He held this aloft in his hands, and when the arresting party of 30 musketeers entered the bishop's dwelling, they did not know what to do. The devout soldiers took off their hats, laid down their arms and knelt to venerate the Sacrament.

How else can one describe this state of affairs without resorting to chess, and declaring it a stalemate? The narrative continued:

"Guards were posted above and below the archbishop's house, on all the street corners, so that no one could enter or go out; and having the lord archbishop in the aforesaid state, and attended by many religious of all orders, word thereof was given to the governor. He sent an order that all the religious and secular priests who remained with his most illustrious lordship should be sent away, although this was not executed, because it was not mentioned in the warrant. [The alguacil mayor had to get a new warrant from the governor and when the order to disperse was ignored, soldiers were ordered in to forcibly take the priests out, leading to some violence and torn habits.] They left two religious [with the bishop], to aid him to bear this imprisonment. The alguacil mayor came to take them away, and hurt one of them with the rays of the lunette owing to the force which he applied; for the religious were clinging to the archbishop, whom they caused to fall to the floor, with the most holy Sacrament. It is only by good fortune that he did not lose his grasp upon it at this time.

"In this confusion a soldier drew his sword and threw himself upon it, intending to kill himself, saying that the man who had seen the most holy Sacrament upon the ground was not fit to live. He lay there, wounded, and thus they took him prisoner, and [he was later exiled] in Zamboanga. The archbishop was left alone with the soldiers, and several of them as good Christians, remained on their knees before the most holy Sacrament, shocked and weeping to see that among Catholics such things could take place.

"At this point, the bishop of Camarines told his most illustrious lordship that the governor said that if he wished to eat, he must abandon the holy Sacrament, and that if he did not do so nothing was to be given him. Thereupon the lord archbishop answered with much courage that he was prepared to die with the most holy Sacrament in his hands, rather than do anything that would be an offense against it. Thereupon they left him without a servant, to the great indignation and sorrow of many soldiers, the governor remaining as hard and obdurate as if he had not been a Christian.

"At 1 o'clock at night, there came a new order that the soldiers should drive from the streets the religious, who had been upon their knees with candles in their hands, worshipping the Lord of heaven and earth, since the time when they had been driven from his presence. They were driven away, by dragging them and tearing their garments, and the cassock and cross were taken from the cross-bearer of his most illustrious lordship. He cried out to God begging for mercy which melted the hearts of all the city, so nothing was heard of but 'Mercy!' accompanied by the tears and apprehensions of the faithful.

"After this was done, at 2 o'clock at night, there came another order that the friars should be made to go back to their convents, which they had not done. The governor sent the sargento-mayor to tell them to go back and not cause any more disturbance. To this, they answered that they had left their convents determined to die for God, and that whether they died there or in Japan was all one, that they would not leave that place, because they were in front of the most holy Sacrament, and, if it should fall from the hands of the lord archbishop, the soldiers must not approach to raise it, as this was not lawful, but they themselves must do so, as priests."

The next day, 24 hours after his drama had started, the aged bishop, who had not taken anything to eat or drink (was he allowed to make trips to the restroom?) put the monstrance down and was promptly arrested. As he stepped out of Intramuros, he shook the dust off his sandals and cursed those who caused his exile.

We have not seen anything as spectacular as this in four centuries.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Love stories

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

WE ALL NEED A BREAK FROM POLITICS, SO I'M GOING to write today about politics—and love stories. Nothing local, nothing scandalous. My stories come out of the Indian subcontinent, set against the turbulence of what they call Partition, always spelled with a capital P.

We go back to the early part of the 20th century to the British colonial occupation of India, which at that time covered most of the subcontinent. Nationalists were agitating for independence but their ranks were split by religion. At the vanguard of the independence movement was the Indian National Congress, with a Hindu majority. An All India Muslim League had been formed in 1906, also working for independence, but wary and suspicious of the Indian National Congress.

The Indian National Congress was actually quite secular, and many of its leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, firmly believed Hindus and Muslims could live together peacefully in an independent India. He was to die for that belief, assassinated by a Hindu extremist who believed Gandhi was trying too hard to appease Muslims at the cost of the Hindus.

Partition

The British exploited the religious divisions because this helped to weaken the independence movement. But in the post-World War II era, the British came to accept the inevitability of independence.

On July 18, 1947, the British Parliament passed an Indian Independence Act that provided for the creation of two sovereign states: India for Hindus and Pakistan for Muslims. The British viceroy, Louis Mountbatten, was in Karachi on Aug. 14 for Pakistan's independence, and then flew on to New Delhi for India's declaration of independence on Aug. 15.

The division of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan, referred to as Partition, turned out to be one of the most traumatic events in world history. There was a massive exodus as Muslims left India for Pakistan while Hindus and Sikhs moved in the other direction. The displaced population was almost about equal—about 7.2 million in each direction.

Both India and Pakistan were totally unprepared for this Partition. The exodus was anarchic and violent, neighbor turning on neighbor because of religion. There were lootings, abductions, rape and massacres. No one will really know how many died during that Partition, with estimates running from 200,000 to one million.

Whenever men go to war, women suffer most severely, as Ritu Menon's "No Women's Land" describes. Village wells were said to be filled up with the bodies of women who killed themselves rather than be raped. There is a particularly heart-rending story of Sikh women who were abducted and forced to marry Muslim men. One of the women described how she killed each child born of that marriage until pity took over anger and she allowed two to live.

The conflict was to simmer for the next 50-plus years, sometimes boiling over. India and Pakistan fought three full-blown wars in 1947, 1965 and 1974. Religious violence is still common within and between countries, between Hindus and Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. Both India and Pakistan have developed nuclear weapons, in an attempt to deter attacks from the other side.

Compassion

As in any human conflict, there are also many stories of compassion. During the Partition, there were people who did protect neighbors of the "other" faith, sometimes even adopting children to shield them from violence. While the exodus was massive, there were many who chose not to move. Today, Muslims still constitute about 13 percent of India's total population. That's about 150 million people, making India home to the third largest Muslim population in the world.

Partition, and the wars that followed, meant a closing of borders, mercilessly separating families, friends and lovers. "No Women's Land" recounts the story of Ismat, a Muslim woman and Jain, a Hindu, who before Partition were able to meet during annual holidays in Kashmir. Partition separated the two. Only aware that Jain lived in the city of Amritsar, but without an exact address, Ismat walked into a refugee camp for Hindus and eventually found her way to Amritsar, where she was reunited with Jain. They were married, but Ismat's family was able to track her down and because she was a minor, she had to be returned to Pakistan.

These sad love stories have provided rich material for short stories, novels and, of course, Bollywood (Indian) films.

Openings

Time tends to heal the wounds. In September 2004, Indian Prime Minister Mammohan Singh and Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf met in New York, culminating several years of quiet diplomacy.

If China opened to the world in the early 1970s through ping-pong tournaments, India and Pakistan have been doing something similar in the last two years by organizing cricket matches, with the two countries alternately hosting the competitions. Large boisterous crowds have shown up for the games.

The borders have opened up rapidly, with regular flights now between India and Pakistan. Two railroad lines along the volatile India-Pakistani border area, closed down after the Partition, are running again.

Trains and railways always provide a wonderful setting for human drama, and these new India-Pakistani lines are churning out more stories of emotional reunions. I was struck by a simple story in one of the Indian dailies about a man who, as a child, used to take the train with his mother, until Partition separated them. Half a century later, he was taking one of the inaugural railway trips with his children so they could finally meet their grandmother.

Some of these stories I picked up during a recent international meeting from Indian and Pakistani friends, exuberant with the renewal of cross-border friendships. And each time they'd tell me a new story, I would remember one of my own, coming from one of our earlier meetings about five years ago.

Over dinner I had noticed two women friends, one Indian and the other Pakistani, huddled together humming a plaintive tune. Curious that they knew a common song, I asked what it was about. "Oh," said the Indian woman, "it's a lullaby our mothers used to sing to us."

I was amazed and then remembered, but of course, Pakistani children grow up knowing these lullabies as Urdu, and Indian children know of them as Hindi, but the two languages are practically the same.

We all live with our own Partitions, obsessed with differences. Remembering their mothers' songs, my two friends Gita and Naushin had found a solidarity that transcended the artificial borders put up by religion and politics.

* * *

Announcement: Catch a Bird Fair organized by the Wild Bird Club at SM City Fairview the whole of this week, up to Friday, March 10, daily from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. There will be film shows and bird-watching every afternoon at the adjacent grasslands.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

Of jackasses and winning horses

CONRADO DE QUIROS LAMENTS our fate as one that drifts from one tyranny to another as he compares Ferdinand Marcos' version of dictatorship to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's. While our common exasperation is obvious, our own contribution as a people in the pathology of tyranny is seldom analyzed. There is also such a thing as a "crisis of followership." Jose Rizal mentioned this, albeit in passing: "There are no tyrants where there are no slaves." This crisis stems from the fact that the ideal good follower is the precursor of a good leader.

Societies whose followers are active, independent, critical thinkers who can manage themselves, produce leaders who exactly reflect their ideals of good governance. They are committed to the organization and to persons, principles or purposes beyond themselves. Their personal and organizational goals are aligned. They are competent and avoid obsolescence with continuing education and development. They can move easily into the role of leader and slip back as easily to the role of follower.

In short, good leadership is a function of the followers' competence, not the other way around. This has been shown in studies conducted by experts on various types of organizations—ranging from teams (e.g., formed for Antarctic expeditions) to corporations.

Take the issue of poverty for instance. Very few accept the fact that for as long as we Filipinos rely on mendicant and dole systems for our basic services instead of improving our individual competence for self-governance, the cycle of poverty will continue to escalate with every failed leader we install. De Quiros' analysis putting the blame on every president becoming a tyrant once in power only talks about the fever, not the infection causing it.

Our society with its system of patronage and mendicancy is the generator of a steady supply of tyrants. We fail to look inside out and see that these leaders are a mere reflection of our own incompetence in self-management and our low self-esteem as a people with pre-set ideas on how power should be dispensed. For as long as the gene pool is that of jackasses, one cannot expect to breed winning racehorses.

As Juvenal once said, "A society of sheep only invites a government of wolves." So instead of asking "When will they ever learn?" in the third person, shouldn't we be asking "When will we ever learn?" instead?

—IKE ESLAO,
127 Cypress St, Laguna Belair,
Sta. Rosa, Laguna

Timid as a rabbit in dealing with the well-connected

I HAVE BEEN TO SOME CONVENTIONS on graft and corruption. The conventions were also attended by delegates from other countries. In all these conventions, I asked the delegates of countries which are not prone to graft and corruption, like England, Switzerland, Finland, Hong Kong, why their countries are "clean." Their unanimous answer: They have a working Ombudsman who prosecutes the high and the low without fear or favor.

In the Philippines, big and celebrated cases of graft and corruption are not prosecuted by the Ombudsman. They are investigated either by the Senate or by the House of Representatives for publicity purposes only. The Senate and the House investigate anomalous transactions for remedial legislation only, not to prosecute. Prosecution is the duty of the Ombudsman.

Have we come across any remedial legislation promulgated by these two houses as a result of their investigations? None that I know of.

The Office of the Ombudsman which was created pursuant to Article XI of the 1987 Constitution empowers the Ombudsman to investigate and prosecute on its own or on the complaint of a person regarding any illegal, unjust, improper and inefficient act of omission or commission by any public official or employee.

The Ombudsman can deputize the National Bureau of Investigation, the Philippine National Police, and even the Armed Forces of the Philippines, in carrying out its duties against corrupt and inefficient government officials and employees. If the Ombudsman will just do her duty as mandated by the Constitution, the grandstanding that we see in the Senate and the House will be a thing of the past, and righteousness and justice will prevail throughout the land.

Sad to say, since its creation in 1989 up to the present, the Office of the Ombudsman has been as timid as a rabbit, especially when the government officials involved are connected with the Office of the President or with an influential government office like the AFP and the PNP

—PROCOPIO S. BELTRAN JR.,
2845 Juan Luna St.,
Gagalangin, Tondo, Manila

GMA not to blame for RP's problems

I THINK THE MAKATI BUSINESS Club is going a bit too far in blaming President Macapagal-Arroyo for all the country's problems. Didn't Ms Arroyo try to raise the minimum wage, except that this was met with protests by businessmen? Unless GMA has been stealing government money or killing her political rivals, then the people will just have to wait until the next election.

Why blame the President? How about the congressmen and senators with all their pork? Politicians always have their own schemes to get rich. All the protests and rallies will just frighten off foreign investors. Instead of wasting time in the streets, people should work.

People tend to think the Philippines is worse off than ever. Can they be right with all the malls sprouting up? What about the presence of BMW, Jaguar, Audi and Benz dealers? Isn't the road traffic worse than ever (meaning, more people have cars)? How about all those condominiums being built? How many Filipinos have credit cards and cell phones? Look at all those Starbucks outlets filled to the brim with patrons spilling on to the streets. The preneed plans seem to be collapsing, but they have helped folks send kids to school.

The Philippine economy has grown tremendously. Of course, there are still many who are living in poverty. But there is evidence that there have been improvements in the lives of many. Just look around.

—RUEL GARCIA,
ruel.garcia@stonybrook.edu

Why pay illegitimate debts?

TWENTY YEARS AFTER PEOPLE Power I, Filipinos are still paying debts incurred during the Marcos dictatorship.

As of 2005, the outstanding balance of Marcos' foreign debts was around $926 million or more than P48 billion (at $1: P52). Following the country's loan schedule, Filipinos will be paying for the foreign debts of Marcos until 2025—39 years after he was ousted from office.

An estimated 33 percent of the country's total borrowings during Marcos' term was pocketed by Marcos and his cronies. This amount translates to more than $8 billion. Based on the findings of the Presidential Commission on Good Government, Marcos' ill-gotten wealth reached between $5 billion and $10 billion, and the bulk of these may have come from foreign loans.

The Marcos debts clearly are the result of illegitimate and onerous loans that benefited the private interests of Marcos and his cronies. The largest and most glaring is the notorious Bataan Nuclear Power Plant, for which $1.8 billion in interest repayments alone has been paid since 1986 (with $110.8 million more to go). The Filipino people continue to bear this debt burden while they are being denied access to basic social services.

While the Arroyo administration continues to implement "fiscal reforms" to address its deficit and debt woes, it has still to resolve the basic problem of a national debt bloated by illegitimate loans, such as the Marcos debts. Instead of anti-people measures (such as new and higher taxes) to deal with its deficit problems, the government should reform its debt management policies, starting with a review of the debts incurred by Marcos, to determine which of these are illegitimate and, therefore, not the obligation of the Filipino people.

—ROSARIO BELLA GUZMAN,
executive director,
Ibon Foundation Inc.,
3/F SCC Bldg
4427 Interior Old Sta. Mesa,
Manila

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

PNOC

ENERGY CENTER, MERRITT ROAD, FORT BONIFACIO, TAGUIG CITY
Tel. No. 893-1320 loc. 5291

INVITATION FOR REBID

1. PNOC – Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) has received an ODA loan from Japan Bank for International Cooperation (hereinafter referred to as JBIC), in the amount of 14,460,000,000 00 Yen towards the cost of the No Negros Geothermal Power Projects and intends to apply the proceeds of this loan to payments under the contract for the **SUPPLY AND DELIVERY of:**

   Various Carbon Steel Pipes – FGJ 51060

   Disbursement of an ODA Loan by JBIC will be subject, in all respects, to the terms and conditions of the Loan Agreement, including the disbursement procedures and the "Guidelines for Procurement under JBIC ODA Loans". No party other than PNOC-EDC shall derive any rights from the Loan Agreement or have any claim to loan proceeds. The above Loan Agreement will cover only a part of the project cost. As for the remaining portion, PNOC-EDC will take appropriate measures for finance.
2. JBIC requires that bidders and contractors, as well as PNOC-EDC, under contracts funded with JBIC ODA Loans and other Japanese ODA, observe the highest standard of ethics during the procurement and execution of such contracts. In pursuance of this policy, JBIC;
   a) will reject a proposal for award if it determines that the bidder recommended for award has engaged in corrupt or fraudulent practices in competing for the contract in question;
   b) will recognize a contractor as ineligible, for a period determined by JBIC, to be awarded a contract funded by JBIC ODA Loans if it, at any time, determines that the contractor has engaged in corrupt or fraudulent practice in competing for, or in executing, another contract funded with JBIC ODA Loans or other Japanese ODA
3. PNOC-EDC now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders from eligible source countries for the supply of the Goods for the purpose of the Project
4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information on the bid form and inspect the bidding documents at the office of Supply Management Department c/o **Harold T. Fontillas** PNOC-Energy Development Corporation, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines, Tel. No. (632)893-1320 Loc. 5291, Fax No. (632)893-7380
5. A complete set of bidding documents may be secured by any interested eligible bidder starting **March 8, 2006**, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Four Hundred Pesos (PHP 400.00) Philippine Currency.**
6. For purposes of clarifying matters, a pre-bidding conference shall be held on **March 16, 2006 at 2:00 p.m.** at the above address.
7. The estimated date of award is on **May 22, 2006.**
8. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security in the amount indicated in the tender documents, and in the form acceptable to PNOC-EDC. The bids must be delivered to the above address on or before **2:00 P.M. of March 23, 2006**. Public opening of bids shall follow immediately thereafter. **Late bids shall not be accepted.**
9. PNOC-EDC will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by bidders in connection with the preparation or delivery of bids.
10. PNOC-EDC reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process and to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality in the bids received and to accept such bid which is most advantageous to PNOC-EDC without thereby incurring liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the ground for PNOC-EDC's action.

Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee I

(PDI--March 8, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
CITY OF BAIS
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The City Government of Bais invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply and delivery of the hereunder requirements:

ITEM	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (ABC)
1) PR# 127-06 - various construction materials for Concreting of Mabini Street (Phase I)	P 1,623,020.00
2) PR # 130-06 - various construction materials for concreting of Mabini Street (Phase II)	1,601,740.00
3) PR # 131-06 - various construction materials for Concreting of Juan Luna Street	1,761,268.00
TOTAL	P 4,986,028.00

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

In order to qualify, bidders should conform to the eligibility criteria as prescribed under Sec. 23.11 of the IRR-A of R.A. 9184.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria as specified in the IRR-A of R.A. 9184. As such non-submission of the required documents will result in the disqualification of the bidder.

All other particulars relative to the procurement process shall be govern by the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 9184 otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.

Pre-bid conference will be conducted at the Office of the City Mayor, this city, on **March 24, 2006** at 1:30 P.M.

Bid documents can be obtained upon payment of a non-refundable fee equivalent to the total amount of the ABC of the items in which interested bidders intend to bid, in accordance with the following rates:

Below P 50,000.00	- 0.5% but not less than P 100.00
P 50,000.00 but not more than P 100,000.00	- 0.45% but not less than P 250.00
P 100,001.00 but not more than P 200,000.00	- 0.4% but not less than P 450.00
P 200,001.00 - P 350,000.00	- 0.35% but not less than P 800.00
P 350,001.00 - P 500,000.00	- 0.3% but not less than 1,225.00
P 500,001.00 - P 1,000,000.00	- 0.2% but not less than P 1,500.00
P 1,000,001.00 and above	- 0.1% but not less than P 2,000.00 and not more than P 10,000.00

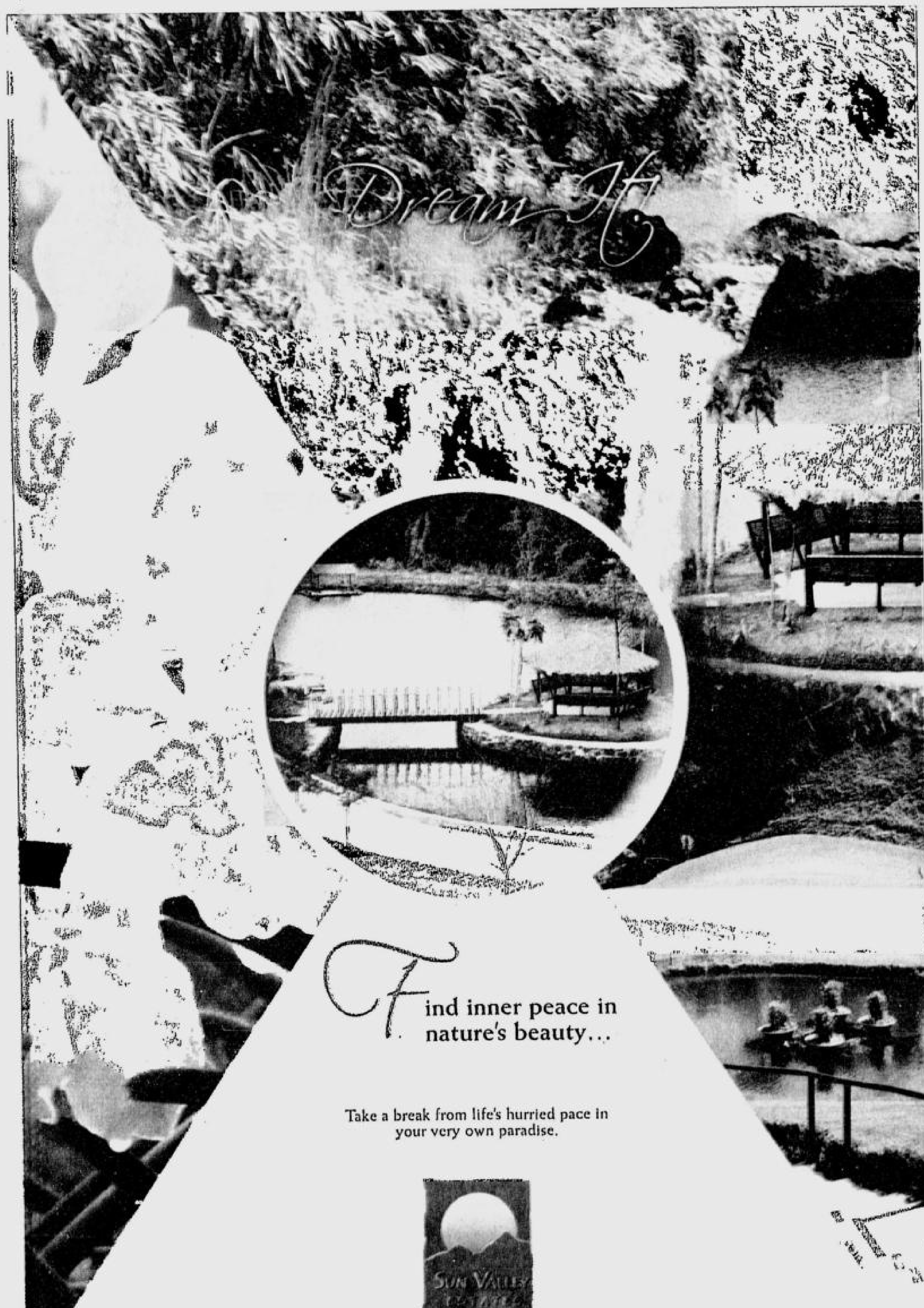
Bid documents can be obtained at the BAC Secretariat c/o Office of the City Mayor or Office of the City General Services, this City, Tel. Nos. (035) 402-3182, or 402-8115, anytime during office hours, and can also be inquired for further information or particulars.

The bidders shall drop their duly accomplished eligibility, technical and financial documents each in separate sealed envelopes duly marked as such in the bid box at the Conference Room at the Office of the City Mayor on **March 30, 2006** at 1:30 P.M. at which place, date and time said envelopes shall be opened in the presence of the members of the BAC, the attending bidders, the observers, or their duly authorized representative. Late bids shall not be accepted.

The City Government of Bais reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at anytime prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

(Sgd.) **CARMELINO L. MORALES**
(City General Services Officer)
BAC Chairman

(PDI--March 8 & 13, 2006)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COA won't audit revenue from Pampanga quarrying

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—THE COMMISSION on Audit has denied requests of a Pampanga official to conduct a special audit of revenues from Mt. Pinatubo's sand and several transactions made by the provincial government from 2002 to 2005.

Assistant Commissioner Sofronio Flores Jr., COA general counsel and head of its legal and adjudication office, turned down on Feb. 15 the request made by Pampanga Vice Gov. Joseller Guiao.

COA Chair Guillermo Carague earlier declined a request made by the vice governor on Aug. 24 last year.

Flores, in a Feb. 28 letter, said he thought it to be an "act of insubordination" if he disregarded Carague's decision.

On the other hand, Carague said the "most appropriate agency to handle the matter (was) the Office of the Ombudsman."

Carague said what Guiao wanted was a "wide-ranging investigation of probable irregularities" that entailed a "long, tedious process of identifying the perpetrators and the gathering of competent and relevant evidence that would be sufficient to stand before the courts of law."

"Who do we turn to now?" Guiao asked.

But the COA has a job to carry out the special audit of Pampanga, according to documents obtained by the INQUIRER.

The 1987 Constitution and the State Audit Code of the Philippines gave the agency the mandate to investigate irregularities in the use of public funds and revenues.

This COA mandate has been upheld by the Supreme Court several times.

Also, the agency had issued 119 special audit orders on local governments and agencies from 2003 to 2005. Several of these orders scrutinized financial transactions covering four to 10 years.

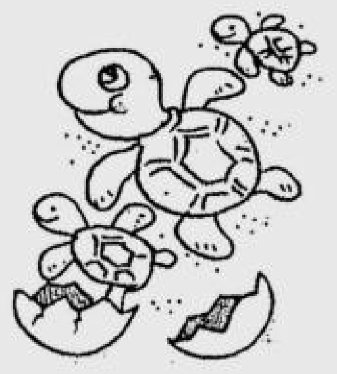
Guiao estimated that last year, Pampanga's coffers lost P176 million in quarry taxes alone.

His requests went unheeded although Deputy Ombudsman for Luzon Victor Fernandez endorsed to the COA at least three complaints filed by concerned citizens.

On Jan. 5, Fernandez asked the COA to submit a report on the third complaint.

Guiao's first request in July last year cited two of the three complaints, the certifications by the National Printing Office and a capitol-accredited printer on fake receipts, and reports on the assignment of non-bonded personnel in quarry checkpoints as bases for doing a special audit. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Resort yields newly hatched sea turtles



CITY OF CALAPAN—SEVENTY-one newly hatched marine turtles, locally called "*pawikan*," were discovered in a beach resort here on Monday and were released to the sea by resort staff and environment officials.

At about 5 a.m. on March 6, Marlon Elmenzo, an employee of Anahaw Island View Resort in Barangay Balete, saw the baby turtles while he was cleaning the area.

The discovery was at first dismissed by the rest of the resort personnel as Elmenzo could not locate the trail that led to the nest.

"We thought they were just a handful of turtles swept by sea currents," Elmenzo said.

However, at about 3 p.m. of the same day, a boy playing in the area found another hatchling.

"We dug the site where this turtle was found and saw other turtles that number around 100," Elmenzo said.

The resort staff immediately called city environment officials, led by forester Alma Gibe, who helped release the turtles to the sea.

The turtles and their habitats are protected under the Wildlife Act 9147.

Gibe said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources gave a certificate of appreciation and tokens, such as baseball caps with embroidered "Pawikan Conservation Project," for those actively involved in the marine turtle conservation and rescue efforts.

The resort, owned by Tess Alcancia, has been actively pursuing other environmental initiatives. *Marciano Virola Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

American teacher found dead in Iloilo apartment

ILOILO CITY—A 58-YEAR-OLD American was found dead inside his apartment here on Sunday in what police believed as a case of suicide.

The body of Charles Randy Shields of Texas was found at about 7 a.m. by a worker at the two-story apartment complex owned by Elsa Nemenzo on San Juan Street, Ledesco Citi Homes in Barangay Banuyao, La Paz District here.

PO3 Sixto Decrepito, La Paz police station investigator, said they found no injuries on Shields and no sign of foul play.

Police also recovered what appeared to be a suicide note and Shield's last will and testament.

Decrepito said they were still waiting for results of an autopsy conducted by the police crime laboratory to determine the cause of Shield's death.

He said the American could have died from drug overdose because they found several empty medicine packets in his room.

In a letter addressed to his friend and fellow American Paul Agiy, Shields thanked him for helping him while he was in Iloilo City.

He also asked Agiy to give his letter to his Filipino wife, Elsa Sacris, a native of Virac town in Catanduanes.

"It takes a great deal of determination to do what I have done," he said in his letter.

Shields, who worked as a teacher and writer in Taiwan, came here six months ago upon Agiy's invitation, said Decrepito.

Agiy told investigators that Shields, who was suffering from various ailments, had been depressed since his wife left him in January.

In his last will and testament, Shields said he should be left alone to die.

"I wish that no more heroic measures would be made to keep me alive. When I'm gone, I'm gone," he said. *Nestor Burgos Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau*

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TransCo
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Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF PROTECTION AND COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT FOR BAUANG SAN ESTEBAN LINE 2 STRINGING PROJECT

Reference No.: PB060213-RM0016/PR No. NWLTLS-06-000015005

1. The *NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, Head Office Region* (TRANSCO-HO) through the *2006 Corporate Budget approved by the TransCo Board* intends to apply the sum of *PhP 9,010,000.00* being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Supply and Delivery of Protection and Communication Equipment for Bauang San Esteban Line 2 Stringing Project Reference No.: PB060213-RM0016/PR No. NWLTLS-06-000015005. Bids received in the excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The *TRANSCO-HO* now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the Supply and Delivery of Protection and Communication Equipment for Bauang San Esteban Line 2 Stringing Project. Delivery of GOODS is required *in forty five (45) days*. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, TTB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below from March 2, 2006 to March 28, 2006 from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of *Php 1,000.00*. The method of payment will be *Cash*. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
5. The *TRANSCO-HO* will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on *March 14, 2006 / 2:00 PM* at the *Admin Conference Room*.
6. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before *March 29, 2006/2:00 PM*. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following form or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Form of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit (1% of ABC)	PhP 90,100.00
2. Bank guarantee (1.5% of ABC)	PhP 135,150.00
3. Surety bond (2.5% of ABC)	PhP 225,250.00
4. Foreign government guarantee (100% of ABC)	PhP 9,010,000.00

7. Bid opening shall be on *March 29, 2006/2:00 PM* at the *Admin Conference Room same address below*. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.
8. The *National Transmission Corporation* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

National Transmission Corporation, Head Office Region
Mr. Armando N. Ochoa, BAC Chairman
MMD Office, G/F TransCo Main Bldg.
Power Center Complex, BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City.
Tel. No. (632) 9812206 / Fax No. (632) 9228432
Website: www.transco.ph

(Sgd.) ARMANDO N. OCHOA
Chairman, Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI - March 2 & 8 2006)

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

Reference:
Date : March 03 2006

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Construction and Installation of 50 MVA Auto-Transformer and Associated Equipment for Daraga Station (Sp05.DGSS.LI-0043R)

Installing and/or erecting high voltage equipment such as 50 MVA Power Transformer including accessories; 230 & 69 kV Power Circuit Breakers, its associated Disconnect Switches and Instrument Transformers including metering, control, protection; and construction of warehouse. The project is located at Barangay Peñafrancia, Daraga, Albay in Bicol Region.

1 The **NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION (TransCo)**, through the **Annual Corporate Budget for the contract approved by the governing board**, intends to apply the sum of **PHP 22,530,359.00** being the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the **Construction and Installation of 50 MVA Auto-Transformer and Associated Equipment for Daraga Substation (Sp05.DGSS.LI-0043)**. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

2 **TransCo** now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential Bidders to apply for eligibility for **furnishing labor, materials, equipment (except materials specified to be furnished by TransCo) supplies, tools and technical services including, delivery and installing of high voltage substation equipment and other works to complete the Project.** Bidders should possess a valid PCAB license applicable to the above type and cost of the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC, and meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents. Interested Bidders must submit their LOIs on or before date and time stated below at the address given below and secure the Eligibility Documents therefrom upon payment of non-refundable fee of stated below. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a **"pass/fail"** basis. The last day for the submission of the accomplished Eligibility Documents shall be on the date of the opening of Eligibility Documents stated below. Only those Bidders passing the eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Documents. PCAB License and Registration Particular required should be as follows:

License Particular — **at least Category "B", SP-Electrical Works**
Registration Particular — **at least "Medium A", SP-Electrical Works**

3 Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, only Bids from eligible Bidders will be opened. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184 a contract will only be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.

4. Interested Bidders shall submit their accomplished Eligibility Documents to the BAC Secretariat at the address given below.

5 Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from **TransCo** and inspect the Bidding Documents at the BCMD at the address given below.

6 A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidders that passed the eligibility check upon the presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretariat, at the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee as stated below. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative starting from the schedule specified below.

7. **TransCo** will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on the schedule specified below.

8 Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the address below on or before the schedule of submission and opening specified below. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any form and in amount stated in the Bidding Documents or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

9 The Contractor shall complete the works within **One Hundred Fifty (150) calendar days** counted from the effective date stated in the Notice to Proceed.

10 **TransCo** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

	Activity	Date	Venue
a.	Issuance of Eligibility Documents	Starting March 06, 2006 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM	BCMD office address below
b.	Submission & Opening of Eligibility Documents	March 20, 2006 9:00 AM	De La Paz Function Room Training Center Bldg., TransCo, Diliman Quezon City
c.	Issuance of Bidding Documents	Starting April 07, 2006 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM	BCMD office address below
d.	Site Inspection	April 18-19, 2006	Daraga Substation
e.	Pre-Bid Conference	April 25, 2006, 1:30 PM	BCMD office address below
f.	Bid Submission & Opening	May 09, 2006, 9:00 AM	BCMD office address below
	Cost of Eligibility documents per copy		P 800.00
	Cost of Bidding documents per copy		P 7,000.00

Mr. JOSE MARI M. ILAGAN
Manager **Bids and Contracts Management Department** (BCMD)
Ground Floor, TransCo Main Building
Power Center, Quezon Avenue cor. BIR Road
Diliman Quezon City 1104
Telephone Nos 981-2308, 981-2212; 981-2213
Facsimile No. 921-2308
Email Address jmilagan@transco.ph
Website Address www.transco.ph

(Sgd.) GUILLERMO R. REDOBLADO
VP – Luzon Operation & Maintenance
& Chairman, Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI - March 8 & 15, 2006)

AFP chief says Leyte tragedy brought best out of war games

A VOLUNTEER rests his spade during a break in efforts to find survivors in Guinsaugon, which military officials said provided an opportunity for Filipino and American soldiers to bond. PDI PHOTO

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—The landslide-buried village of Guinsaugon in St. Bernard, Southern Leyte, did not only symbolize tragedy.

It also deepened the friendship between Filipino and American soldiers and gave them a unique Balikatan training, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga said as he and US officials closed this year's large-scale war exercises on Sunday here.

"When asked for help, true friends do not ask why; the question asked is how," Senga, referring to the participation of US Marines, soldiers and sailors in the rescue and retrieval operations in Guinsaugon starting Feb. 17.

"In the wake of the tragedy, our American friends, together with other allies, did not hesitate to support and help the Philippines," Senga said.

About 600 of the 5,500 US troops involved in Balikatan 2006, three ships, and several aircraft were diverted to the disaster response program.

"They were seen helping people they do not even know—a true manifestation of service and [they were] expecting nothing in return. It was a showcase of Balikatan—standing together shoulder to shoulder," said Brig. Gen. Daniel Casabar, Philippine exercise director.

In a statement, the exercise's combined information bureau said Philippine and US forces established seven evacuation camps, secured the safety of more than 5,000 evacuees and moved more than a million kilograms of food and other supplies.

Aside from these, the bureau said the joint forces completed boat salvaging operations in Cavite, live fire exercises in Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, parachute training in Clark, leadership training in Ternate, Cavite, and medical and engineering projects in Jolo, Sulu.

"[Balikatan 2006] is a demonstration of our ability to work side by side, shoulder to shoulder, and to become closer friends and closer partners," said Brig. Gen. Mastin Robeson, US exercise director.

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Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

ROUNDUP

NPA rebel suspect slain

CARAMOAN, Camarines Sur—A suspected New People's Army guerrilla was killed in a clash with soldiers in Barangay Bahay, Caramoan, Camarines Sur on Tuesday. Col. Desi Yabo, commanding officer of the 42nd Infantry Battalion, said the rebel, who was unidentified, was buried on March 2. Yabo said the soldiers also captured on Wednesday a suspected NPA member, identified as Dan Rodriguez. ***Juan Escandor Jr., Southern Luzon Bureau***

Reunion for Metro Alaminos

A GRAND reunion of Pangasinenses dubbed "2006 High" would be timed with Alaminos City's feast of St. Joseph on March 11. In a press statement, Alaminos Mayor Hernani Braganza said 2006 High seeks to gather inputs for the transformation of the city into a Metro Alaminos. He said the city's vision is to become an environmentally friendly place with a development program centered on growth with equity, "where people matter most." He said the event would bring together Alaminos and Pangasinan residents who are abroad or are in other places in the country to help in promoting ecotourism in the Hundred Islands National Park. Registration for 2006 High is open on the official website of Alaminos City (www.alaminoscity.gov.ph).

UWI NA!
2006 HIGH!

Entomologist wins award

DAVAO CITY—Entomologist Dr. Reynaldo Abad, of the Philippine Coconut Authority here, was recently handed the Gawad Saka Scientist award by the Department of Agriculture. Dr. Jaime Bergonio, regional coordinator of the Gawad committee, said Abad's studies on rhinoceros beetles and nettle caterpillars had helped farmers control coconut pests. Southern Mindanao is one of the coconut-producing areas of the country, but production has been threatened by pests. Abad received P25,000 in cash and a grant of P500,000, which he could use to fund his other projects. ***Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Dogs put to sleep

OZAMIZ CITY—The city government has put to sleep 14 stray dogs as part of its anti-rabies campaign, Dr. Evelyn Sunico, city veterinarian, said. Sunico said that in keeping with the animal welfare law, the dogs were disposed of in a painless way. She said the city government impounded 32 dogs starting last week but the 14 dogs had to be euthanized first because these were sick. The anti-stray dog ordinance, passed in 2002, requires residents to keep their dogs at home. ***Ryan Rosauro, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

GOODBYE CRUEL WORLD!

Budget lack hounds DTI

DAVAO CITY—The government could not provide consumers full protection from unscrupulous businessmen because of lack of manpower and funds, a top trade regional official said. Marizon Loreto, assistant director of the Department of Trade and Industry in Southern Mindanao, said that although the government was very aggressive in ensuring consumer protection from various forms of illegal business practices, it was "constrained from doing so due to problems of manpower and budgetary constraints." As a result, she said, the DTI had decided to tap the help of village executives. ***Judy Quiros, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL ELECTRIFICATION ADMINISTRATION
National Electrification Commission

APPLICATION FOR THE RENEWAL OF FRANCHISE TO OPERATE AN ELECTRIC LIGHT, HEAT AND POWER SYSTEM IN THE CITIES OF BACOLOD, TALISAY,
MUNICIPALITIES OF MURCIA AND SALVADOR BENEDICTO, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF NEGROS OCCIDENTAL.
NEC CASE NO. 2006-28
CENTRAL NEGROS ELECTRIC COOPERATICE, INC., (CENECO)
Applicant
x-----------------------------------x

NOTICE OF HEARING

Applicant, an electric cooperative duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the Philippines, requests that it be granted a renewal of franchise pursuant to NEC Resolution No. 7424 dated November 8, 2006 to operate electric light and power system in the Cities of Bacolod, Talisay, Bago and Silay and in the Municipalities of Murcia and Salvador Benedicto, all in the province of Negros Occidental.

This application will be heard by this Commission on March 30, 2006, Thursday at 10:00 in the morning at the Board Room of Central Negros Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CENECO) Bacolod City, at which hearing, Applicant will present evidence of its capabilities, financially, technically and institutionally to operate electric light, heat and power service in the area applied for.

At least ten (10) days prior to date of hearing, Applicant shall publish this Notice of Hearing once in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

Applicant shall submit at the hearing, proof of compliance with these requirements, Affidavits of the editors of business managers of the newspapers in which in this notice of hearing was published, together with complete copies of the issues of the newspapers.

The applicant is also hereby directed to post this Notice of Hearing in the Cities of Bacolod, Talisay, Bago and Silay and in the Municipalities of Murcia and Salvador Benedicto, all in the province of Negros Occidental as well as in CENECO headquarters and sub offices ten (10) days prior to the date of hearing.

Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition with the Commission at least five (5) days before the date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the Applicant and appear at the hearing with such evidence as may be proper in the premises. Failure on the part of any person affected to file his or her opposition on time and appear at the hearing will be construed, as a waiver of his or her rights to be heard and the Commission will proceed to hear and decide the application on its merits.

Given this 28th day of February 2006, Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines

By the Authority of the Commission:

(Sgd.) NOLLIE B. ALAMILLO
Corporate Board Secretary V and
OIC -NLC Office

Noted by:

(Sgd.) Atty. JOHN JOSEPH M. MAGTULOY, CPA
Deputy Administrator for Legal Services

(PDI – March 8, 2006)

Judge acquits mayor

A MANILA REGIONAL Trial Court judge yesterday acquitted a Laguna mayor of charges that he murdered a barangay watchman in 1995.

In his decision, RTC Branch 41 Judge Vedasto Marco said there was no proof beyond reasonable doubt that Lumban Mayor Reynato Macalalag was guilty of the murder of Alberto Quiatzon.

The judge, however, sentenced Macalalag's aide, Sonny Cacalda, who shot Quiatzon while the victim was arguing with the mayor, to 12 to 13 years in prison for homicide.
Margaux Ortiz

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

'Ylang-ylang Village' smells success

By Russell Arador
Anao, Tarlac

EVER SINCE ANAO TOWN IN TARLAC RECEIVED the Galing Pook award in 2000 for its ylang-ylang livelihood program, its officials have found themselves in the thick of activities aimed at hastening the growth of its showcase industry.

The activities, spearheaded by Mayor Rodolfo Guerrero, involved promoting and marketing the essential oil extracted from ylang-ylang flowers; physical, chemical and quality tests of the oil in laboratories here and abroad; and enlisting the help of the Department of Science and Technology in the design and fabrication of an efficient oil-extracting machine.

"It was such a long process, but the waiting is over and (it) paid off well," declared Anao's official website at www.geocities.com/anaotarlac2004.

Last year, for example, the essential oil passed "a series of rigid evaluations" conducted by the Center for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries, an agency of The Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As a result, the CBI invited the municipal government of Anao to join an orientation seminar for exporters to the European Union market in Rotterdam in April last year, according to community affairs officer Maria Rosette Bagayas. The mayor and his wife attended.

Korean market

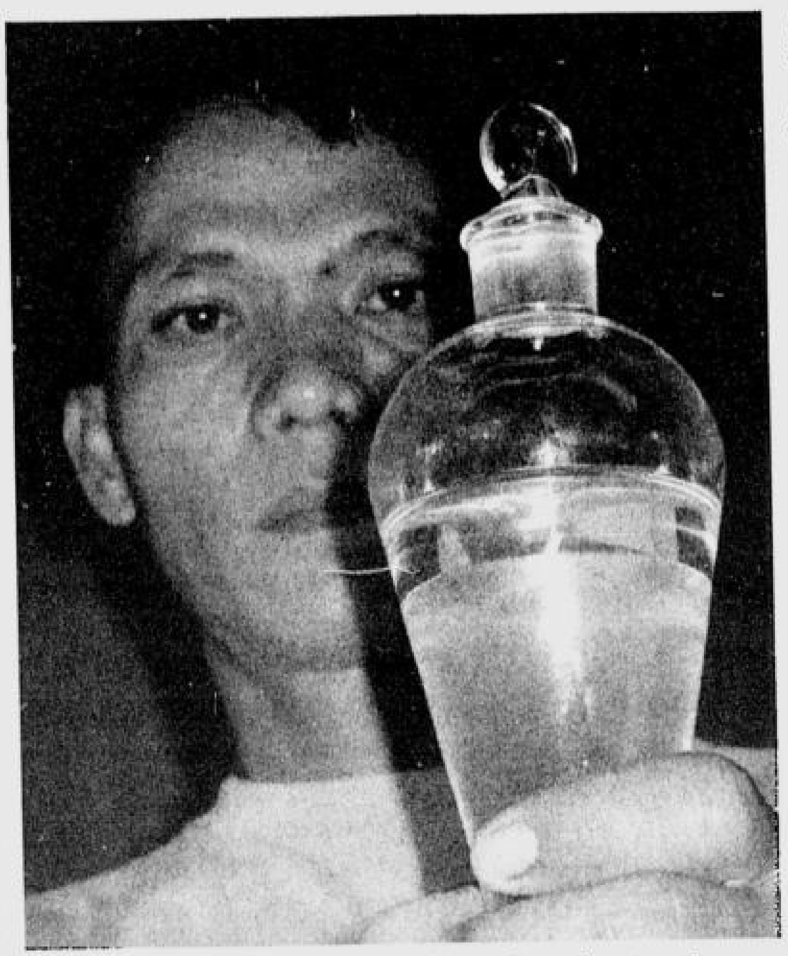
The Anao ylang-ylang oil has also attracted a group of Korean businessmen. Guerrero said the municipality would sign a memorandum of agreement with a Korean manufacturer of skin care products as part of efforts to bring the product to the international market.

Under the MOA, the company will lease the town's facilities to extract the essential oil at P10,000 per month, buy ylang-ylang flowers from residents at P50 per kilo, and pay the municipal government an annual royalty equivalent to 2 percent of the gross income.

"On a daily basis, the company will buy from the residents ylang-ylang flowers, and since the demand is continuous, the income of the people will also be continuous," Guerrero said.

"Aside from this, the company will spend its own money and thus the local government will no longer have to put up money to buy flowers from the residents."

But the local government will still be involved in advocacy and training.



HIGHLY priced essential oil extracted from ylang-ylang trees in Anao, Tarlac will soon penetrate the world market. RUSSELL ARADOR

Training pickers (harvesters) is crucial to ensure the steady supply of ylang-ylang flowers, Guerrero said.

"They should harvest the flowers in full bloom so harvests are continuous," he said in Filipino.

The municipal government will also continue manufacturing, promoting and marketing a line of ylang-ylang-oil-based products.

'Aroma Anao'

Branded as "Aroma Anao," the products include shampoos, lotions, colognes and perfumes, and conditioners.

Bagayas said the ylang-ylang industry in Anao had come a long way since 1989 when the tree *(Cananga odorata)* was chosen as a potential industrial crop.

The selection, however, was made accidentally.

In 1989, municipal officials led by then Mayor Clemente Apuan and representatives of the Technology and Livelihood Research Center were on an inspection tour of the town when they saw 72 flowering ylang-ylang trees.

They recommended that the ylang-ylang livelihood project be included in then President Corazon Aquino's Rural Industrialization Can Happen (Rich) program and the Program to Refocus Orientation to the Poor (Pro-Poor).

The Rich program encouraged towns nationwide to specialize in one product. Thus, ylang-ylang became Anao's dominant industrial product and the town became known as the "Ylang-Ylang Village."

Technology

Aside from improved packaging and formulation of the ylang-ylang products, welcome developments happened through the concerted efforts of town officials and residents, and the support of individuals and organizations here and abroad.

A 50-kilogram capacity extractor machine has been developed and constructed by the Forest Products Research and Development Institute (FPRDI) in Los Baños town in Laguna.

Using the hydrosteam distillation method in extracting essential oil from the ylang-ylang flowers, the machine is an improvement over the extractors previously used by the town.

The Ylang-Ylang Primary Multipurpose Cooperative (YPMC) was organized to make full use of local labor resources in the planting of ylang-ylang trees, harvesting and sale of flowers, and manufacture and marketing of the products.

The industry has also made a headway in planting more ylang-ylang trees to boost the supply of raw materials.

According to Bagayas, the Tarlac College of Agriculture (TCA) in Camiling town has devoted 20 hectares to the planting of ylang-ylang trees, along with nearby towns of Moncada and Capas in Tarlac, and Nampicuan in Nueva Ecija.

"In the 1800s, ylang-ylang oil from the Philippines, called Manila Oil, was the world standard. Now it's oil from Madagascar. The challenge for us is to make our oil the global standard," Bagayas said.

Tabak at 21: Theater for the people

By Rogerson Dennis Fernandez
Baguio City

THE PERFORMING ARTS scene in Baguio City is alive through the continuous involvement of university-based theater groups in school and community events.

One of these groups, the Tanghalang Bayan ng Kabataan sa Baguio (Tabak-Baguio) based in the University of the Philippines Baguio, has continued a tradition of performance that combines entertainment and sociopolitical issues.

Since its establishment in 1985, Tabak has gained its mark as a youth theater organization committed to showcasing nationalistic, mass-oriented performances. It began as the cultural arm of the League of Filipino Students and has brought social, economic and political issues to its audience through songs, dances and performances.

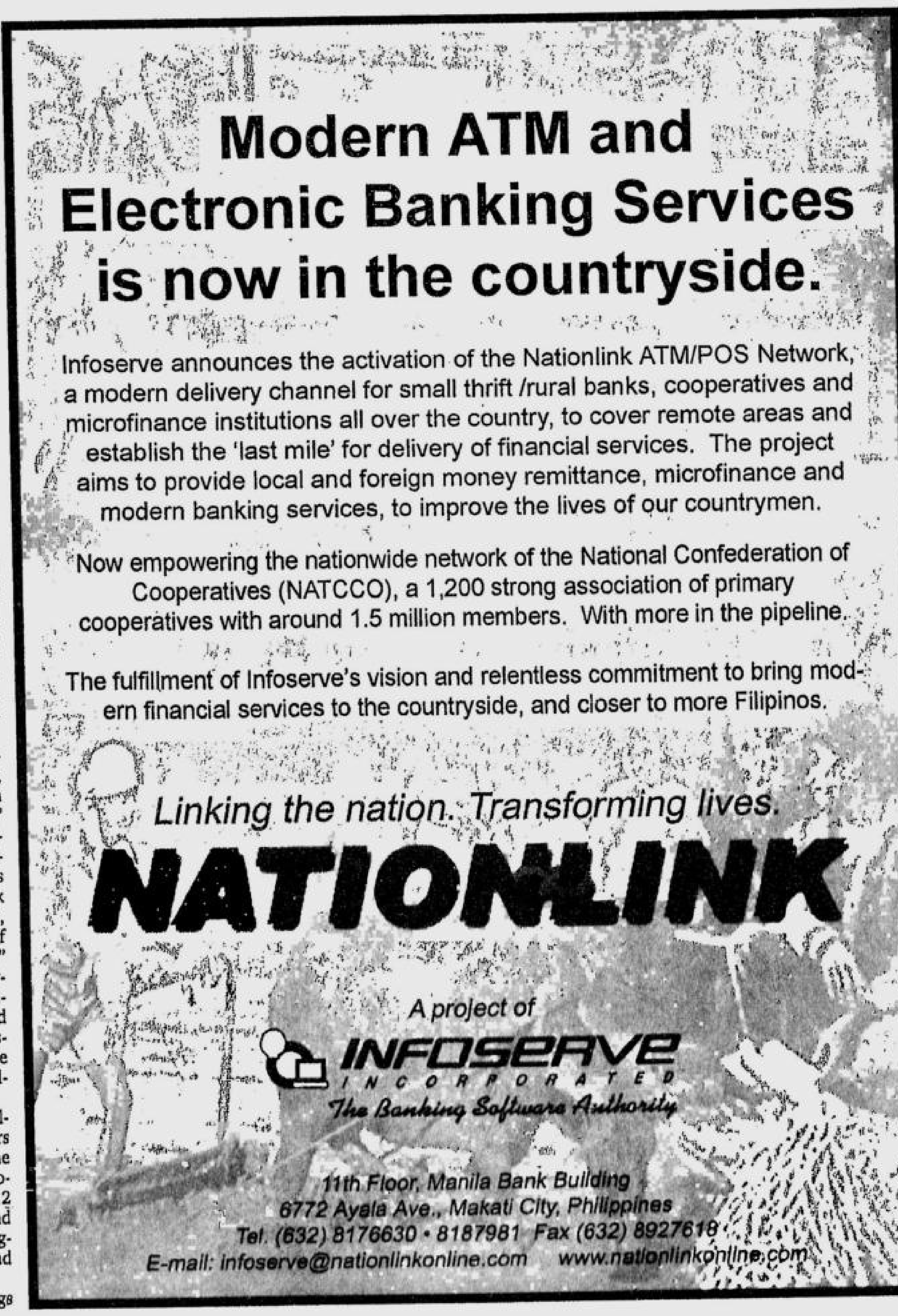
On its 21st anniversary this year, Tabak launched on Feb. 9 "Bente Uno," an album of its original songs. The album's production was initiated by Tabak founder Manny Palo, the screenwriter of the film "Death Row" (starring Eddie Garcia and Cogie Domingo). It was produced through the assistance of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA).

"Bente Uno" recollects Tabak's 21 years of dedication to the "theater for the people." The album's 12 songs revolve around themes of mass struggle, labor, love and social issues.

Most of the songs were composed by Tabak co-founder Bong Ramelo.

The album features the songs "Ka Ramon" (about the struggle of farmers), "Awit ni Concepcion" (a love song composed by Prof. Toto Colongon), "Himig ng Alyansa," "Pauwi sa Amin" (about student life), "Hinihintay" (labor and family issues) and the poem recital "Panalangin sa mga Dukhang Pinagpala" that features Ramelo's "Sa Kamay ng Kaaway."

Its carrier single, "Tanghalan," describes the life of a theater organization dedicated to the people and reflected on Tabak's origins and growth.



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TARLAC II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
San Nicolas, Concepcion, Tarlac

INVITATION TO BID

The Tarlac II Electric Cooperative, Inc. (TARELCO II), in compliance with the Guidelines of the Energy Regulatory Commission, invites sealed bids from eligible Bidders to supply a 22 megawatt (MW) energy requirement of the TARELCO II franchise area commencing in 2010. Due to the impending power shortages indicated in the Department of Energy's (DOE) Power Development Plan (PDP), preference will be given to new and clean generation capacity built within the TARELCO II franchise area.

The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the eligible Bidder or his authorized representative from TARELCO II Main Office, San Nicolas, Concepcion, Tarlac, Philippines beginning March 9, 2006. A Pre-Bid Conference will be conducted at the TARELCO II Conference, San Nicolas, Concepcion, Tarlac, on March 15, 2006 PM.

Sealed proposal shall be received by the TARELCO II–BAC at TARELCO II Main Office, San Nicolas, Concepcion, Tarlac, on or before 2:00PM (official time), March 21, 2006 at which time and place said proposal will be opened and read in the presence of Bidders or Bidders' representatives who choose to attend. Late submission will not be accepted.

The TARELCO II hereby reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any informalities therein and to accept such bid as may be considered advantageous to the cooperative.

(Sgd.) PABLITO D. MAGCALAS
PBAC Chairman
TARELCO II

(PDI – March 5 & 8, 2006)

Philippine Amusement & Gaming Corporation
A Global Corporation with a Global Mindset and a Filipino Heart

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
ITB NO.: 02-05-2006 MAC

The Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR), through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers / manufacturers / distributors / contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project : One (1) lot Janitorial Service for Casino Filipino – Mactan Required Personnel. 38 Janitors
Approved Budget : Eight Million Eight Hundred Nine Thousand Three Hundred Eighty One & 92/100 Pesos (Php 8,809,381.92)
Contract Duration : Two (2) years
Source of Fund : Internally Funded

Only suppliers duly registered with PAGCOR shall be allowed to participate in the bidding. Unregistered suppliers must register at the Suppliers Registration & Evaluation Section (SRES), Procurement & Property Department (PPD), 2nd Floor PAGCOR House, 1330 Roxas Blvd., Ermita, Manila, Tel. No. 526-0573 or at the Branch Property Office – CF-Mactan, Airport Road, Lapu-Lapu City, Tel. (032) 340-4032.

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Pre-Bid Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	*Schedule*
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	March 3, 2006–March 30, 2006
2. Pre-Bid Conference	March 17, 2006 (2pm)
3. Submission of Bids	March 31, 2006 (2pm)
4. Opening of Bids	March 31, 2006 (2pm onwards)

Bid documents will be available to prospective bidders at the BAC Secretariat Office, 2nd Flr. PAGCOR House, 1330 Roxas Blvd., Ermita, Manila or at the BBAC Secretariat – CF-Mactan upon payment of a non-refundable amount of *Four Thousand Four Hundred Four & 69/100 Pesos (Php 4,404.69)*. In order to secure the documents, bidders should present the Official Receipt issued by our Cashier to the BBAC Secretariat.

PAGCOR assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

PAGCOR reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

Please address all communications to the Branch Bids and Awards Committee, CF-Mactan.

(Sgd.) NILO C. OMOLON
Chairperson, BBAC CF-MACTAN

(PDI - March 8 & 15, 2006)

QC court frees suspected smuggler: Cops in uproar

From page A1

arbitrary" and was allegedly based on an "erroneous interpretation of the law."

The police said Lee, when he was arrested on Sunday at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport where he planed in from Hong Kong, had tried to offer P300,000 in cash to the leader of the arresting team, Insp. Pedro Velasco.

Velasco turned the money down and charged Lee with bribery.

The arrest of the 41-year-old Lee, who reportedly has ties to the First Family, is considered an achievement in the fight against smuggling, which costs the government about P100 billion in foregone revenues yearly.

Lee was among the suspected smugglers named in a recent Senate hearing, along with Vicky Toh and Lucio Co, who are also purportedly close to First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo.

The police vowed to go after other suspected big-time smugglers and officials of the Bureau of Customs on the take.

"We have other targets in the coming days," said Supt. Benjamin de los Santos, head of the CIDG-Criminal Investigation and Detection Division. "In the upper echelons, (we will go after) three or four (more) names."

Inquest at DOJ

Lee was brought for inquest to the Department of Justice yesterday following his arrest for allegedly ordering the diversion of a shipment of plastic resin from a customs bonded warehouse to a company in Valenzuela City.

Lee arrived at the DOJ at noon and was presented to State Prosecutors Hazel Valdez and Olivia Torrevillas.

Lee is facing a complaint of violating the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines for facilitating the transport or concealment of unlawfully imported material.

He was accused of ordering the diversion of three container vans of plastic resin to Consumer Plastic Packaging Corp., which police said was Lee's dummy corporation."

The vans containing plastic resin were supposed to be brought to a customs bonded warehouse where they would be processed into finished products and then exported. Resin is a major component in making plastic products such as chairs and tables.

The plastic resin shipment, had it been diverted to the private corporation, would have been used to manufacture products to be sold locally and thus not levied the proper amount in taxes.

The police have appealed the ruling in the office of Quezon City Prosecutor Claro Arellano, according to De los Santos.

The prosecutor on duty, Ma. Gracia Cadiz Casaclang, had "found no valid case for arrest citing Section 5, Rule 113 of the Rules of Criminal Procedure and/or insufficiency of evidence to hold respondent for trial in court," the CIDG motion for reconsideration said.

"The Quezon City prosecutor initially recommended that the suspect be released for further investigation on the grounds that there was no valid arrest. We, however, contested it strongly because it was a valid arrest, it was an in *flagrante delicto* case," said De los Santos.

"She (prosecutor) had a misappreciation of the facts. (Lee's) battery of lawyers who went to the Quezon City prosecutor were pounding on the smuggling case, but we argued that we were not here to inquest him for the smuggling case, but to charge him specifically for direct bribery," he said.

Bedan connections

De los Santos said one of Lee's lawyers earlier bragged to him about his "strong Bedan connections" with the office of the city prosecutor and dropped the names of two city lawyers.

At the DOJ, prosecutor Valdez said she was informed by Lee's lawyer that he would try to find a court that would agree to grant bail to Lee even before the case had been filed.

Lee's lawyer also told DOJ lawyers that he would seek a reinvestigation of the case after it had been filed in court.

Yesterday, the police also disclosed what they learned about Lee so far. The police said he had faced about a dozen estafa cases, the files of which police investigators obtained from the National Bureau of Investigation.

On Sunday, when he was arrested, the police already had an arrest warrant that stemmed from one of these cases.

The police disclosed further alleged violations by Lee of the country's laws on customs and tariffs.

"Through a dummy corporation, Liontext Enterprises Inc., managed by Ronhina Alohado, suspect Lee imported raw materials, high density polyethelene resins from Singapore and filed an import entry through misdeclaration (of the resin) as raw materials and grossly undervalued the shipments in three containers," the police report said.

Quoting intelligence sources at the Bureau of Customs, the police said Lee had dropped the names of government officials, including customs commissioners, politicians and even "Mike" Arroyo, in his alleged illegal activities.

"But based on our investigation, and in fairness to the First Gentleman, there is no showing whatsoever that Sammy Lee or the known smugglers in the Port Area are directly linked to him, or to Vicky Toh," De los Santos said.

US tells RP . . .

From page A1

Philippines for having passed an anti-money laundering law that met global standards, allowing the country to be stricken off the list of "non-cooperative" countries in February last year.

It also noted that the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) created by that law was "quick to respond" by freezing suspected terrorist funds worth some P500 million ($9.7 million) as of November 2005 "at the request" of the UN Security Council, Washington and other foreign governments.

But the yearly report also recommended further measures for the Philippines "to become a more effective partner in the global effort to stanch money laundering and thwart terrorism and its financing."

Posted by the US Embassy on its website yesterday, the INCSR noted some specific transactions or private entities that "still operate outside the control" of the AMLC.

Need transaction reports

"There is increasing recognition that the nearly 20 casinos nationwide offer abundant opportunity for money laundering, especially with many of these casinos catering to international clientele arriving on charter flights from around Asia," the document said.

Several of these gambling facilities are located near small provincial international airports that "may have less rigid enforcement procedures and standards for cash smuggling," it noted.

The council actually has the power to request casinos operated by the state-owned Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. to submit CTRs and STRs (covered and suspicious transaction reports) "but it has not yet done so," the report said.

The annual monitor also drew attention to the "over 5,000 NGOs" in the Philippines which were not required to file transaction reports with the AMLC.

Limited control

Groups that include charitable and nonprofit entities fall under "limited regulatory control" by the Securities and Exchange Commission, it said.

They are "rarely held accountable for failure to provide yearend reports of their activities, and there is no consistent accounting and verification of their financial records."

"Because of their ability to circumvent the usual documentation and reporting requirements imposed on banks for financial transfers, NGOs could be used as conduits for terrorist financing without detection," the report warned.

Other observations and recommendations in the report included the following:

- That the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas be empowered to impose administrative penalties in AMLC-covered financial entities that do not comply with reporting requirements.
- That stockbrokers and accountants also be required to report CTRS and STRs.

OFW remittances

- That a law be passed empowering the AMLC to issue administrative freezing orders to prevent questionable funds from being withdrawn before a court order is issued.
- That the growing inflow of dollar remittances from overseas Filipino workers make "cash smuggling a major concern" for the Philippines, with $2-3 billion of such funds remitted outside the formal banking system as per latest BSP estimates.

The report, however, did not explicitly link OFW money to terrorist activities.

The INCSR carried the oft-repeated call of US officials for Congress to pass an antiterrorism law with provisions thwarting terrorist funding.

Billion-dollar drug trade

The document opened by acknowledging reports that the drug trade in the Philippines had grown into "a billion-dollar industry," marked by an increase in organized criminal activity from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

"Reportedly, insurgency groups operating in the Philippines fund their activities, in part, through the trafficking of narcotics and arms, as well as engaging in money laundering through alleged ties to organized crime," it noted.

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Suspects in frat hazing face raps

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE MAKATI POLICE HAVE FILED CHARGES against several suspects in the death of Clark Anson Silverio, a Technological University of the Philippines (TUP) student, during alleged hazing rites in Makati City last week.

Only seven of the suspects, however, were identified.

Charged in the Makati City Prosecutor's Office for violating the anti-hazing law were TUP students Edmar Gipan, Jayson Fabella, Federico Guanlao, Aldrin Bolado and Regan Toralba, all members of the Tau Gamma Phi fraternity.

Of the five, only Gipan is in the custody of the police. He has also undergone inquest proceedings to determine if there was probable cause for the filing of charges against him in court.

Also charged were Betty Sarayot, the owner of the warehouse in Barangay San Isidro, Makati, where the hazing rites took place, her son Mark, a certain Daryl and several John Does.

"The charges were filed based on statements of witnesses and the school identifying the suspects as members of the fraternity. We recommended that the suspects at large be subjected to preliminary investigation, and the prosecutor would determine their culpability," said MPD Homicide's PO2 Nilo Sadsad, case investigator.

The investigator said two of Silverio's fellow neophytes said Fabella had recruited them into the fraternity. Guanlao and Daryl, on the other hand, were seen in the warehouse on Friday, at the time the initiation rites were held.

Toralba, Bolado and the John Does, were reportedly among the 20 teenagers who gathered at the warehouse, according to a caretaker.

"Under the law, we could file charges against the owners of the place where the alleged initiation happened, especially if they knew about it," Sadsad told the INQUIRER.

Last Friday, Silverio, an 18-year-old mechanical engineering student at TUP, was declared dead on arrival at the Manila Sanitarium Hospital in Pasay City. The police said he died from injuries he sustained during the initiation rites.

Silverio's sister, Renelyn, and a fellow neophyte who also underwent initiation rites, stood as private complainants.

In a letter sent to the Makati police on Monday, the TUP Office of Student Affairs said that the Tau Gamma Phi fraternity "was not a registered student organization," and that "all activities of the said organization were illegal."

Pasig blasts set off by 'weak' explosive

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE TWO BLASTS THAT HIT A compound in Pasig City which housed police offices last Friday were caused by a "low explosive chemical."

But the police have yet to determine the motive behind the incident which occurred just hours before President Macapagal-Arroyo announced that she was lifting the state of emergency she had declared a week earlier.

Eastern Police District (EPD) director Chief Supt. Charlemagne Alejandrino said laboratory tests showed that the suspects used a "low explosive chemical," which he described as a very weak explosive material.

But he could not say how the materials were ignited to trigger the explosions since there were no wires, batteries or timers recovered in the area.

The EPD had formed Task Force Metrowalk headed by Alejandrino to investigate the minor explosions which took place in the Payanig Compound, just beside the Metro Walk restaurant strip on Meralco Avenue. Alejandrino yesterday showed the INQUIRER sketches of two suspects whom a witness saw in the area minutes before the twin blast. The two were reportedly on board a green Honda Wave motorbike.

The homemade explosives could have been thrown in the area or manually ignited, Alejandrino said.

"The persons responsible for setting them off just wanted to scare people, not hurt anyone," he added.

Parañaque school still closed after mercury spill

By Jocelyn R. Uy

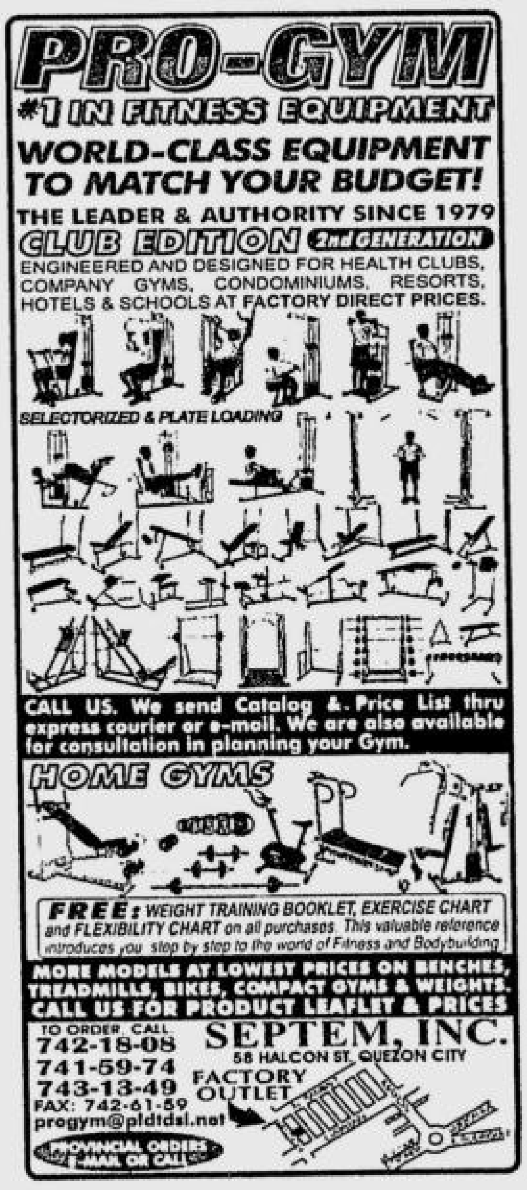
THE ST. ANDREW'S SCHOOL IN Parañaque City will remain closed despite a cleanup of the school following a mercury spillage incident on Feb. 16.

Dr. Olga Virtusio, City Health Office (CHO) head, yesterday said the Occupational Safety and Health Center of the Department of Labor and Employment will conduct tests this week to determine whether or not the mercury contamination has decreased to a safe level.

Before the cleanup, the mercury level in the two classrooms where the chemical was spilled "went beyond the threshold" of .1 microgram per cubic meter"—considered toxic to humans, Virtusio told the INQUIRER.

However, contamination outside the classroom was minimal.

The Department of Health and the CHO are still monitoring 106 students, teachers and staff suspected to have been exposed to the chemical.



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METROBRIEFS

Have you seen my wallet?

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ

HE WOULD HAVE gotten away with the crime if only he had enough presence of mind to keep his wallet in his pocket. Authorities are now looking for a policeman named PO2 Arnold Adto after his alleged victim positively identified him through his police identification card as the one who, along with another suspect, took his dark green Toyota Land Cruiser on Monday night, Marikina City Police chief Senior Supt. Manuel Gaerlan said. Gaerlan said that based on the recovered police ID, Adto was assigned at the National Capital Region Police Office Regional Headquarters Support Group. Complainant Fernando Lorenzo, 58, told the police he was parking his car in front of the Aruray Bar in Barangay San Roque at around 10 p.m. Monday when two men carrying guns suddenly approached him. At gunpoint, they asked Lorenzo to get out of the vehicle. When he did, the two men got into the Land Cruiser and fled. But Adto did not know that he had dropped his wallet, which contained his police ID and salary slips, while on his way out of the bar, Gaerlan said. Lorenzo and other witnesses later identified the picture on the ID as one of the two alleged car thieves, Gaerlan added. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

CHIMES award for top Lasallians

THE DE LA SALLE University-System will give the 2006 Lorenzo M. Tañada CHIMES award to three outstanding Lasallians at the De La Salle-Araneta University in Malabon City today. The annual event aims to recognize any member of the DLSU community who exemplifies the core values of CHIMES (Common Good, Honesty, Integrity, Meritocracy, Excellence and Service) as advocated by Tañada, one of the university's most illustrious alumnus. This year's awardees are La Salle Greenhills' Head Administrator for Center for Spiritual Development Eden Battad, LSGH Adult Night High School faculty Dr. Gilbert Yang, and Dr. Manuel Calairo of the De La Salle University-Dasmariñas Cavite Studies Center.

How to catch this thief at police office?

By DJ Yap

A THIEF INSIDE POlice headquarters?

A policeman was left with this puzzler on Monday night after he lost personal items inside his locker at a police office in Camp Karingal, Sikatuna Village, Quezon City.

SPO1 Rodrigo Barrameda Jr., who is detailed at the QC police Criminal Investigation Division (CID), discovered that his locker inside the CID investigation room had been forcibly opened on March 6.

Barrameda told fellow investigators that the padlock to his locker was missing, as well as his backpack containing his service firearm, a .38-caliber revolver.

Also missing were P500 in cash, a jacket, a pillow and an apron, he said.

Barrameda discovered the theft at around 6:30 p.m. when he readied himself for the night shift, according to a report in the CID blotter.

Efforts to find the bag and valuables proved fruitless, police said.

It was not immediately clear if the suspect was a civilian or another policeman.

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region VII, Cebu City

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid
SECURITY SERVICES FOR NFA REGION VII

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY**, through its Corporate Budget for 2006 intends to apply the sum of SIX MILLION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-TWO THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE PESOS AND NINETY CENTAVOS (P 6,142,259.90) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract of Security Services for NFA Region VII for the period covering May 31, 2006 at 3:00 PM to 3:00 PM of December 31, 2006. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY** now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for 2006 Security Services of NFA Region VII. Delivery of the GOODS is required upon receipt of Notice to Proceed in the following NFA offices and warehouses:

Location	No. of Guards	ABC/Guard /Month (Php)	ABC/Guard/ Day (Php)	Maximum No. of Days/Mo.	Maximum No. of Months	Total ABC (Php)
LOT 1 (CebuProvince)						
Regular Posting						
Cebu City	22	12,075.92			7	1,859,691.68
Badian/Bogo	8	11,373.33			7	636,906.48
Sta. Fe/Tudela	8	10,299.03			7	576,745.68
Sub-total	38					3,073,343.84
Special Events						
Unloading						
– Cebu City	3		402.53	15	7	126,796.95
– Sta. Fe	3		343.30	3	7	21,627.90
– Tudela	3		343.30	4	7	28,837.20
Cebu Province						
– Dispersal to Provinces	3		402.53	37	7	312,765.81
Dispersal to Units	3		402.53	5	7	42,265.65
Sub-total	15					532,293.51
Total for LOT 1	53					3,605,637.35
LOT 2 (Bohol)						
Regular Posting						
Tagbilaran	13	10,836.12			7	986,086.92
Carmen	3	10,836.12			7	227,558.52
Ubay	3	10,836.12			7	227,558.52
Sub-total	19					1,441,203.96
Special Events						
Unloading-Tagbilaran	3		361.20	15	7	113,778.00
– Ubay	1		361.20	3	7	7,585.20
Sub-total	4					121,363.20
Total of LOT 2	23					1,562,567.16
LOT 3 (Negros Or. & Siquijor)						
Regular Posting						
Dumaguete	6	10,836.12			7	455,117.04
Guihulngan	3	10,836.12			7	227,558.52
Siquijor	3	10,299.03			7	216,279.63
Sub-total	12					898,955.19
Special Events						
Dumaguete	3		361.20	8	7	60,681.60
Siquijor	3		343.30	2	7	14,418.60
Sub-total	6					75,100.20
Total of LOT 3	18					974,055.39
Grand Total	94					6,142,259.90

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act".

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (telephone numbers: (032)232-1939 / (032)233-6095; e-mail address: nfaro7@cvis.net.ph, website www.nfacebu.net.ph) and inspect the Bidding Documents at *NFA, Banilad, Cebu City* starting March 8-15, 2006 from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of *Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00)* in cash.

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY** will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on ***March 16, 2006 @ 09:00 AM*** at *NFA Training Center, 3rd Flr., Banilad, Cebu City.*

Bids & eligibility requirements must be delivered during the bid opening on ***March 31, 2006 @ 09:00 AM at NFA Training Center, 3rd Flr. Banilad, Cebu City.*** All bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in an amount at least equal to and not lower than a percentage of the Approved Budget for the Contract to be bid, in the following schedule and form or any combination thereof: Cash or Cashier's Check or Manager's Check - one percent (1%); or Surety Bond issued by GSIS marked "Callable on Demand" - two & half percent (2.5%). Late Bids shall not be accepted.

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) PIOLITO C. SANTOS
RBAC Chairman/ARD

(PDI – March 8 & 15, 2006)

DBP
Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines is inviting interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the **Supply and Delivery of the following Vehicles:**

Vehicle Type	Units	Unit Cost/Budget	Approved Budget*	Cost of Bid Documents
"Four wheel vehicle preferably locally manufactured chassis and body, engine with displacement of 2.5 L direct injection four stroke diesel, GVW not more than 2320 kgs., Max. output not more than 102PS/4200 RPM, Max. Torque not more than 200Nm/2500 RPM, 5 speed M/T, Power Steering, Brakes (front/rear) ventilated discs/drum, 235/70 R 15 Alloy magwheels with center cap, Spare Tire with cable lock, Side step board, Airconditioning System dual/manual, All power doors/windows, safety features equip, security alarm system with keyless entry, digital clock, seat belts (front/rear), headrest (front/rear), AM/FM stereo cassette with CD player, Tint (one-way), Warranty (3 years). Free LTO registration, sunshield matting, EWD, seat cover.	9	P940,000.00	P8,460,000.00	P5,000.00
"Four wheel all terrain or sport utility type 4x4 Pick-up double cab vehicle with heavy duty chassis and body. Engine with displacement of 3000 cc., 3.0 L Turbo intercooled diesel, GVW not more than 2,790 kgs., power of not more than 163PS/3800 RPM Torque of not more than 343Nm/3200 RPM, 5 speed M/T, Power Steenng, 15" Alloy magwheels of 245/70 R 16 6 studs, spare tire with cable lock, Brakes front ventilated disc and rear drum, ABS with EBD, Shift on the Fly (push button), All Power features (doors/windows), Standard interior/exterior features equipped., Safety features with airbag, Multi-directional Fog lamps and Security features equipped with remote keyless entry with alarm, Side step board, Seatbelt (front/rear), Headrest (front/rear), Airconditioning System with multiple vents , AM/FM stereo cassette with CD player, Tint (one-way), Warranty (3 years). Free LTO registration, sunshield matting, EWD, seat cover."	6	P1,330,000.00	P7,980,000.00	P5,000.00
"Four wheel sedan vehicle with four (4) doors and gasoline engine with a displacement of 1600 cc 4 cylinder in-line 16 V, DOHC, 1.6 L 5 speed M/T, Max. output not more than 116 HP (118 PS)/6,000 RPM, Max. Torque not more than 160 Nm (16.3 kg m)/4,400 RPM, EFI, Brakes Front 14 ventilated Disc/rear leading-trailing drums, Tires 185/70 R 14, Alloy magwheels design, Power Steering, Airconditioning System with 4 speed blower, AM/FM stereo cassette with CD player, All power (windows/doors), Digital clock, Headrest (front/rear) ABS 4 wheel with EBD and BA, Safety and security system equipped with keyless entry, Tint (one-way), Warranty (3years). Free LTO registration, sunshield, EWD, seat cover, floor matting.	1	P 748,000.00	P 748,000.00	P500.00

*Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening

Expected Date of Delivery: May 2006
Schedule of Activities:

Particulars	Date	Venue
Pre-Bidding Conference	March 17, 2006 (Friday) at 9:00 a.m.	6th/Floor, DBP Building, Makati City
Submission of Eligibility Requirement Documents, Technical and Financial Proposals	"On or before" 9:00 a.m. of March 31, 2006 (Friday)	BAC Secretariat, 6th/Floor, DBP Building, Makati City
Opening of Eligibility Requirement Documents, Technical and Financial Proposals (Prospective Bidders are encouraged to attend this activity)	March 31, 2006 (Friday) at 9:30 a.m.	6th/Floor, DBP Building, Makati City

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, and is restricted to Filipino citizens or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest belonging to citizens of the Philippines **and must be authorized car dealer for the last three (3) years**. Only Bids from Bidders who passed the eligibility check will be opened. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall undergo the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during post-qualification procedure.

Interested parties may download these forms at www.devbankphil.com.ph and at the Electronic Procurement Service of the Department of Budget and Management. Prospective bidders may secure the bid documents and Eligibility Requirement Forms from the BAC Secretariat, 6th Floor, DBP Building, Makati City, upon payment of a **non-refundable fee depending on the total amount of the approved budget of the contract of a particular item/s the prospective bidder intends to bid. Only those prospective bidders who bought the bid documents will be allowed to attend the pre-bidding conference scheduled on March 17, 2006.**

The Development Bank of the Philippines reserves the right to reject any and all bids, annul the bidding process, or not award the contract at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

For further inquiries, please call telephone numbers 8125702/8189511 loc. 2610

Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI—March 1 & 8, 2006)

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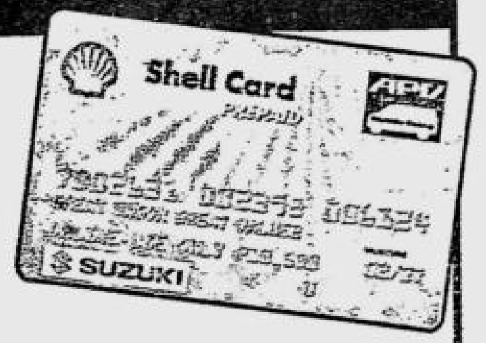

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Now, Barrera wants 2nd crack at Pacquiao

REVENGE OR BIG MONEY: Dual world champion Marco Antonio Barrera writes WBC chief to say he wants Pacquiao. AP

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

EITHER IT'S THE HUNGER FOR revenge against his Filipino tormentor Manny Pacquiao or the lure of another megabuck payout.

Whatever the reason, Mexican super featherweight king Marco Antonio Barrera now wants to defend his WBC crown against Pacquiao, who humbled him in 11 rounds in their first showdown in 2003.

WBC president Jose Sulaiman, in a faxed message addressed to Pacquiao, manager Shelly Finkel, promoter Gary Shaw and Games and Amusements Board chair Eric Buhain yesterday, revealed that Barrera had contacted the WBC office to announce his readiness to face Pacquiao soon.

The champion's offer came as a surprise to the Pacquiao camp. The Filipino ring hero is still savoring his decisive Jan. 21 victory over another Mexican legend, Erik Morales, and is being lined up to fight Oscar Larios on June 25 at the Araneta Coliseum.

Pacquiao dealt Barrera a terrible beating in November of 2003, downing him in the third round before forcing the stoppage in the 11th following another knockdown.

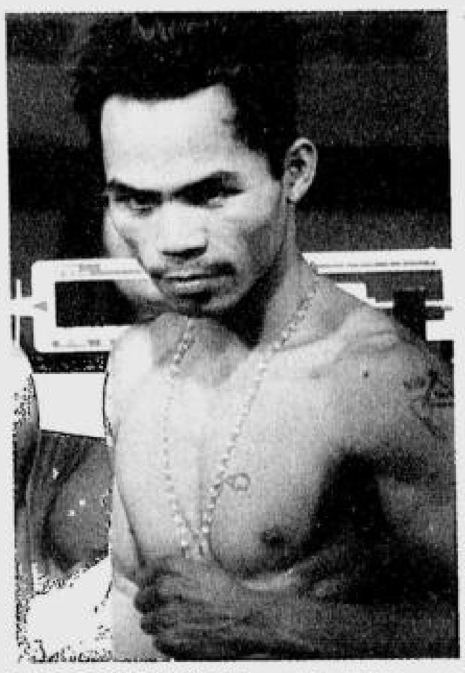
"The WBC super featherweight champion of the world, Marco Antonio Barrera, has contacted the WBC to let us know that he is ready and willing to make his WBC mandatory defense against Manny Pacquiao," Sulaiman said in his letter.

"It is absolutely necessary that you inform us within seven days, as requested before, if you accept the official challenger position and if you are ready to fight Barrera for the WBC superfeatherweight championship."

Buhain said he would call Pacquiao's men, saying: "This is the biggest event we have been waiting for to transpire."

Barrera was scheduled to challenge IBF lightweight champ Jesus Chavez on March 25, but the bout fell through after Chavez suffered a torn muscle in his left bicep that requires surgery.

A rubbermatch with Mexican Erik Morales has been set for Sept. 16 in Las Vegas, but now that Barrera, also the IBF superfeatherweight titlist, has come into the picture, Pacquiao may have to choose who to fight after Larios.


WHO TO FIGHT?: Manny Pacquiao. AP

Giants hoping to live up to name

GAMES TODAY (*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:40 p.m.—Sta. Lucia Realty vs Purefoods
7:35 p.m.—Talk 'N Text vs Barangay Ginebra

DESPITE BEING ONE OF THE shortest teams on paper, the Purefoods Chunkee Giants are hoping to stand tall this conference.

The Giants put their championship defeat behind them as they start off their Gran Matador Brandy-PBA Philippine Cup campaign against the towering Sta. Lucia Realtors today at the Araneta Coliseum.

"They (Realtors) definitely have the height advantage," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio, who lost the recently concluded Fiesta Conference championship to Yeng Guiao and Red Bull.

"We have one of the shortest lineups but we've shown that we could compensate it with quickness and heart," Gregorio added.

To bolster their limping roster, the Giants reactivated Rey Evangelista, Eugene Tejada and signed up Arnold Gamboa.

The moves were done in the hopes of making up for the absence of Jun Peter Simon and Jondan Salvador, who suffered various injuries in the Finals.

Salvador, who will be out of the season, had an ACL tear on his left knee that will take nine months to heal completely while Simon is recuperating from tendinitis on the same knee.

"We don't want to think about the players who are not in the injury list," said Gregorio.

While the Giants have become short-handed in the wing and power forward spots, the Realtors, who last saw action in last conference's wild-card elimination two months ago, have kept a healthy, intact lineup.

Talk 'N Text and Barangay Ginebra, teams heavily favored to win the crown last conference but came up short of expectations, also get their campaigns off the shelf.

The Phone Pals will parade a new coach in Derrick Pumaren along with some key acquisitions in the mid-season break. Poch Juinio and John Ferriols will beef up the Talk 'N Text frontline to divert defensive attention from Asi Taulava.

The Kings hardly tinkered with their lineup but will play minus Jayjay Helterbrand and Andy Seigle, both out of commission due to injuries. *June Navarro*

12 teams in fold as 3rd NBC caging gets going Friday

TWELVE TEAMS—SIX FROM the north and from the south—will see action in the third season of the National Basketball Conference (NBC) which unwraps Friday at the Tagaytay Sports Complex in Tagaytay City.

This year's contenders are defending champion Ozamiz Cotta, Iligan Crusaders, North Cotabato Braves, Pagadian Explorers, Tribu Sugub and Valencia Batang Tagaytay, Bacchus/Harbour Centre-Manila, Laguna/Sta. Rosa City and Pangasinan Hundred Islands in the north division.

The opening games on March 10 pit Spring Parañaque against Bacchus/Harbour Centre and Batang Tagaytay against Pangasinan. The Explorers of Mayor Sammy Co will host the Golden Harvest on March 17.

The tourney will be aired on Prime Channel, the official cable carrier and one of the sponsors. The other supporters are Panasonic, Sulpicio Lines, Nature's Spring, Firefly Electric, Spring Cooking Oil and Molten.

"Going into our third year, I'm happy to note that NBC has achieved its goal of promoting basketball in the grassroots," said NBC president and shooting champion Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla yesterday at the PSA Forum, where he guested together with Tagaytay Mayor and NBC executive vice president Bambol Tolentino, Mayor Efren Pinol of North Cotabato and secretary general Tito Palma.

Tolentino said his city's involvement in NBC is meant to boost tourism. For his part, Mayor Piñol, who represented his brother, Gov. Manny Piñol, said they are in the league to show that North Cotabato is a peaceful and ideal place for sports and other activities."

EUGENE Torre falls to Richard Bitoon JUNJIE MENDOZA

TOP seed Mark Paragua, lucky winner JUNJIE MENDOZA

Paragua, Antonio advance; Torre tumbles in La Union

SAN FERNANDO CITY, LA UNION—DEFENDING champion Joey Antonio was lucky, top seed Mark Paragua even luckier.

The two Grandmasters escaped from the jaws of defeat to thwart their respective opponents Tuesday and advance to the semifinals of the 5th La Union Open Chess Championships at the Diego Silang Hall of the La Union Provincial Capitol Building here.

Hard luck fell on GM Eugene Torre, however, as he yielded to International Master Richard Bitoon, who also barged into the semis with IM Ronald Dableo.

Paragua and Antonio will part ways at 9 a.m. Wednesday, with Bitoon and Dableo colliding in the other semis pairing.

The 21-year-old Paragua recovered from a losing position to salvage a draw with IM-candidate Oliver Dimakiling in their last tie-breaker while Antonio also rebounded from a precarious position to checkmate time-pressured Fide Master Wesley So in Game 2 of their sudden-death playoff. Paragua, who handled black, and Dimakiling tied twice (1-1 standard, 1-1 blitz6), forcing the playoff. *NM Marlon Bernardino*

Sison quit after he was sacked at Montaña

By Jasmine W. Payo

FLUSHED INTO A CONTROVERSY SURPRISE, Montaña Pawnshop is now trying to put order back to a team orphaned by head coach Robert Sison.

First up, the Jewels management appointed yesterday assistant mentor Nel Parado as interim coach after Sison surprisingly quit his post last Monday, less than three weeks before the PBL Unity Cup fires off on March 25.

It's now up to the former UST head coach to whip up the team to competitive shape.

"We want to put an end to this issue soon," said Parado. "We're giving it a week. We're hoping to have a good start on Monday."

Montaña officials admitted that Sison's decision caught them by surprise, but clarified in a released statement that the move came after the management suspended the mentor last Friday.

"We didn't know about his (Sison's) plans, I'm just following the orders of the team owner," said Jun Abrahan, the newly appointed head of basketball operations, in a statement.

Although team officials would not disclose the reason for the suspension, sources said Sison had a "disagreement with the Montaña management" regarding a young player's recruitment.

Parado admitted there would, indeed, be new faces in the Jewels' roster.

"We hope to have a complete lineup by next week," he said.

But Parado, who took over the Jewels' practice since Monday, noted that time isn't on his side.

"Right now I just need the full cooperation of the management, staff and players," he said.

RP Open badminton unfolds May 24; Hidayat likely to join

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE ONCE-POSTPONED PHILIPPINE Open badminton championships will push through on May 24-28, hopefully with Olympic and world champion Taufik Hidayat in the fold.

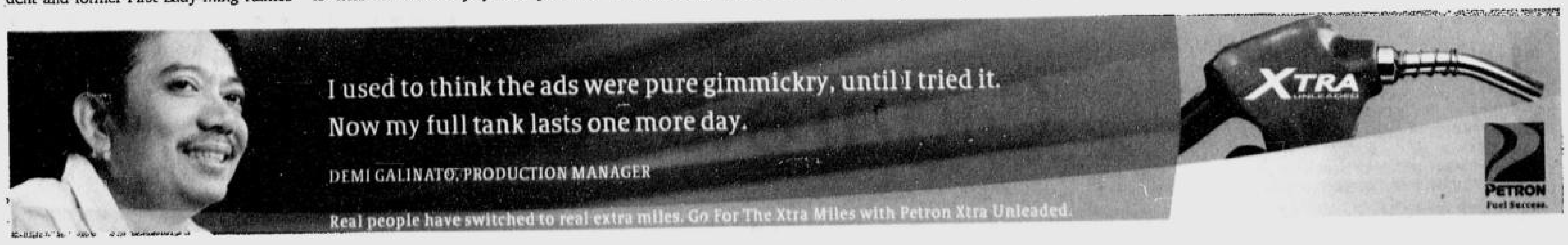
Philippine Badminton Association president and former First Lady Ming Ramos announced this yesterday, saying the decision to move the event—due to the recent political upheavals—"could be a blessing in disguise as it would allow more teams to compete and give players time to prepare."

Ramos said moving the tournament date from March 1-5 would allow Hidayat to heal his knee injury and join the $120,000 tournament dubbed as the Bingo Bonanza Philippine Open.

The Indonesian ace is expected to lead the foreign bets, along with the likes of Nathan Robertson, Gail Emms, Lin Dan, Pi Hongyan and Mia Audina Tjiptawan.

Ramos appeared as guest in yesterday's PSA Forum at the Pantalan Restaurant in Manila along with the PBA vice president, retired general Edgardo Aglipay, Bingo Bonanza president Albee Benitez and Princess Galura of the organizing International Management Group.

The event, to be held in cluster with the prestigious Thomas and Uber Cup in Japan, as well as the Singapore and China Open, will still be held at the PhilSports Arena, according to Aglipay.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The eternal sunshine in Jason's mind

By Percy D. Della

COMMENTARY

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA—AMERICA HAS seen his story over and over again.

But a student's video that captured Jason McElwain's jaw-dropping feat two weeks ago did the rounds of television sports shows again Sunday (Monday in Manila).

It was a no-brainer for sports directors to highlight Jason's performance one more time.

Because his triumph in a mere basketball game Feb. 24 carried a more profound impact off the court.

The 17-year-old McElwain is team manager of the Greece Athena High School basketball team in New York State. All season, he kept stats, ran the clock and handed out water bottles.

For the team's last game of the year, Greece Athena's coach inserted Jason's name on the roster.

The idea was for the athletic department to give him a jersey and for the officials to allow him to sit on the bench.

Heck, the coach even told him if the time was right, Jason could go in and play.

Jason got the chance of his life with four minutes left in the game and Athena, battling for a division title, went ahead by double digits.

His first shot was an air ball, missing the ring by a mile. He flubbed a layup the next time he got the ball, drawing snickers from spectators.

Then it happened.

Prodded by players he had motivated all year, the 5-foot-6 McElwain hit six three-point shots and a 2-pointer.

When the buzzer sounded; he was carried off the court on his teammate's shoulders.

While the whole team whooped it up, the stadium crowd stood stunned. Many, including Jason's coach, were emotional wrecks.

You see, Jason is a special-education student.

He is autistic.

Jason's mom says watching his son's performance has broken the Berlin Wall of autism—a little-understood developmental disease.

But our hero who did not learn to speak until he was 5 and still lacks social skills himself does not really care about his autistic situation.

His advice to people with autism: Just keep working and just keep dreaming.

Jason's so-called 15 minutes of fame is a stuff made for Hollywood.

That's why 25 film production companies, including The Walt Disney Co., now want the rights to his story.

In the real world, meantime, the eternal sunshine in Jason McElwain's mind has shone on a lot of people.

His attitude speaks volumes about the three Ds.

Devotion.

Determination.

And best of all, dignity.

* * *

Sports note: Another Jason continues to warm many a heart on Kapitan Berong Street, Barangay Parada, Valenzuela, Bulacan. Every year when he's around, during the Yuletide or summer break, 6-year-old Jason Morado makes people around him walk with more spring in their step.

You can never say the same for Jason, who was born with almost no left leg. But the people of Parada are blessed. His sunny disposition rubs off on everyone. More about Jason Morado later.

SPORTSWATCH

Ynares, Magsaysay entries spearhead NCA finalists

BINANGONAN BALBINA OF ITO YNARES AND Zabong RT 114 of JV Magsaysay scored 3 points each Wednesday to lead the qualifiers into tonight's championship round of the National Cockers Association's first 7-cock derby for March at the Roligon Mega Cockpit in Parañaque City. The two-pointers were RM Firefly of Amboy Manlapaz, Firefly 100 RM, Firefly 13 RM of William Go, Mulawin C VGB Colorado of Frank Berin and BR Fatman S Bacolor of Tony Tan. Binangonan Balbina I of Ynares, Jimafer Mapalad and Joker each got 1 1/2 points. Scoring 1 point apiece were Frankie Uy's Firefly 14, Ronnie Puno's Wild Wing Sundance, Arman Santos' Jade Resort and Jade Resort Juliane, the Pichay-Briones tandem's Pichay Spartan, Rudy Albano's Mulawin AA, Iggy Arroyo's Red Creek I and Red Creek II, Ellan Nagano's Jaen Col. VGB Firefly and Rene Medina's Lucky Rin Firefly Binangonan.

Sta. Ana derby set March 28

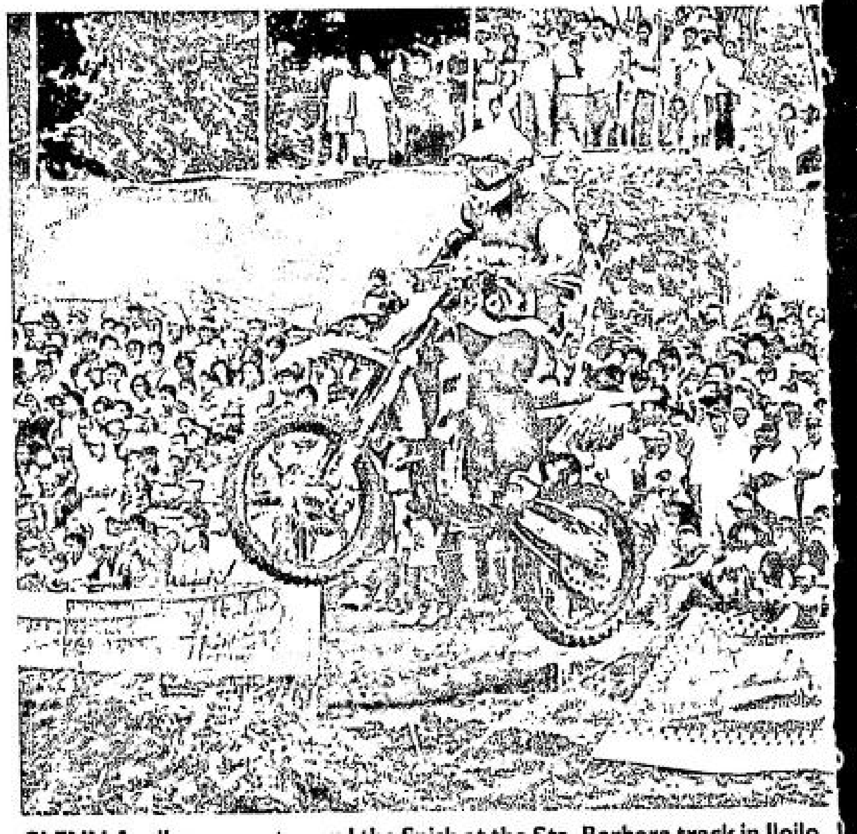
A SPECIAL 3-COCK DERBY OFFERING A CASH POT of P150,000 on March 28 will usher in a series of derbies at the Sta. Ana Cockpit on AP Reyes Avenue in Makati City. Lito Roque of the Pasay Group is host of the event which has an entry fee of P5,500. According to pit manager Butchoy Olano, Sta. Ana Cockpit is now open to derby promoters. Meanwhile, the Fastest Win One-Cock Ulutan is also slated this Saturday at the same venue with Boyet Medina and Ate Vi as hosts. For inquiries, call 898-3474 or 898-3475.

Super Big Event gets going

ACE GAMEBIRDS WILL BE FIELDED WHEN THE Super Big Event 5-cock derby kicks off today at the San Juan Coliseum. The 75-fight program is sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. A cast of derby champions will vie for the title, among them Patrick Antonio, Pol Estrellado, R. Pineda, Dicky Lim, boxing hero Manny Pacquiao, Boy de Roca, Rep. Gerry "Boy" Espina, Rey Briones, Biboy Enriquez, Gov. Tony Kho, Raymond Velayo, Jingco Brothers, Jet Fernando, Alex Escalona, Golden Circle Group, Tony Marfori, Benjie Lim and derby hosts Butch Pichay, Jing Paras and Nonoy Libanan. Meanwhile, Cris Milla of Tarlac ruled the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines 5-cock derby last Wednesday, when his Gerona entry tallied four wins and one draw.

Trouble-free Aguilar tops Iloilo Supercross

By Christian Irl Tan
PDI Visayas Bureau



GLENN Aguilar zooms toward the finish at the Sta. Barbara track in Iloilo.

GLENN AGUILAR RACED TROUBLE-FREE all day Sunday to sweep the Pro Open and Pro 125 divisions in the second round of the Camel Supercross International Championship Series at the Santa Barbara Race Track in Iloilo City.

Aguilar, the 2004 Asian supercross champion, took the Pro Open crown via an impressive victory over veteran compatriot Jovie Saulog and Bebet dela Cruz, who finished second and third, respectively.

In the Pro 125 race, Aguilar outhustled and outsmarted runner-up James Robinson of New Zealand and Dela Cruz.

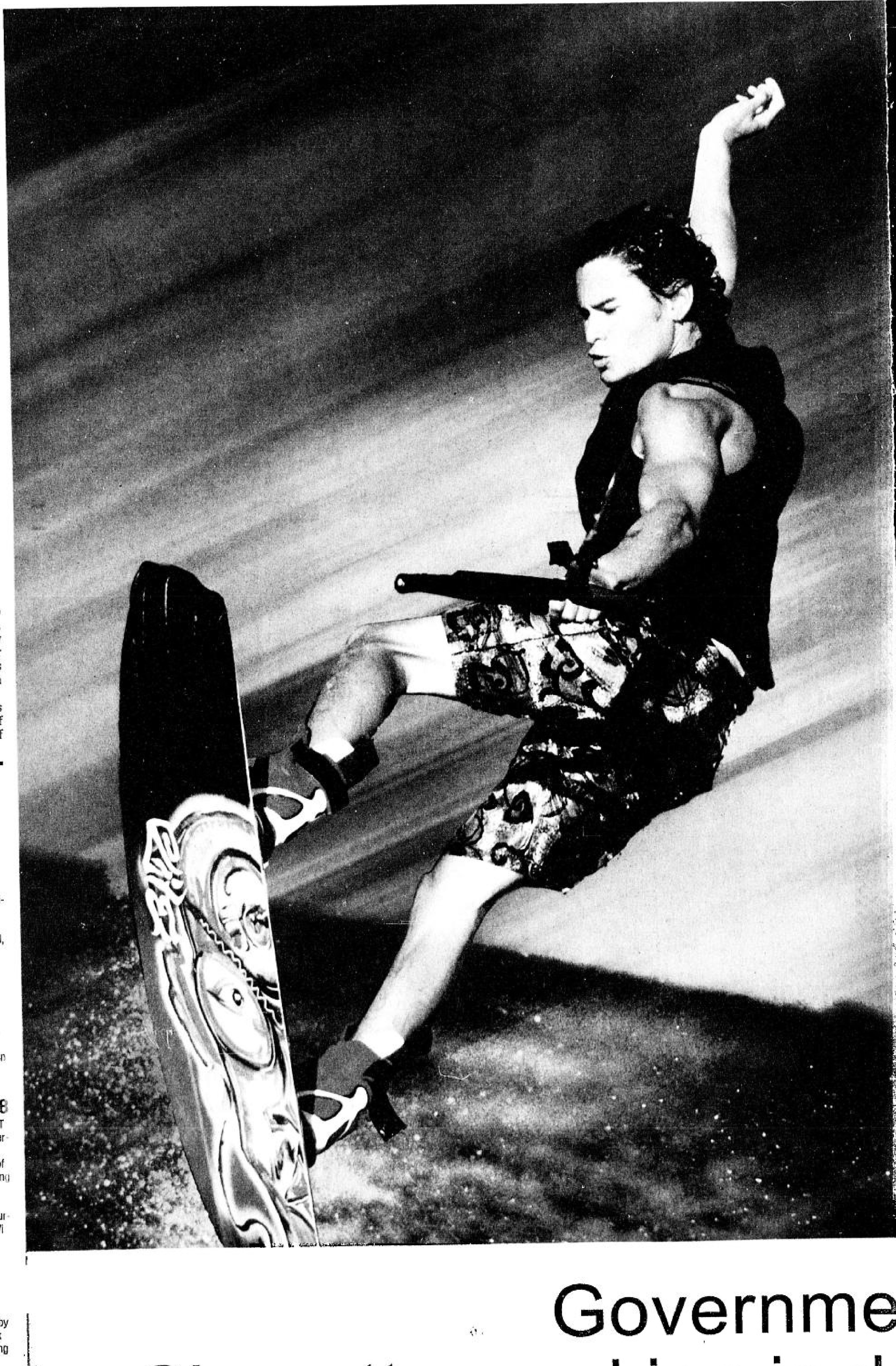
Aguilar, who recently copped the Golden Wheel international award for his motocross exploits last year, also topped the Pro 125 championship in the first round of the event held at the Talisay Stadium in Talisay City last month. He lost to Robinson, though, in the Pro Open.

Rounding out the top 10 riders in the Pro Open race were Robinson, Kenneth San Andres, Popeye Rubi, Irwin Uypitching, Jerry Beech, Joebanie Leyva and Kenneth Belleza.

San Andres, Saulog, Jimboy Marcelo, Uypitching and Beech finished fourth to eighth places, in that order, in the Pro 125 category of the event that drew about 130 competitors from the Philippines, Canada, Saipan, Hong Kong and Guam.

The event was supported by the National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association (Namssa) and the International Federation of Motorcycles (IFM).

Saulog, De la Cruz and Dennis Acdol Jr. powered JMS-Honda to the team title. JMS-Honda thwarted Clark Eagles, which won the Camel Supercross opener in Talisay.



Governme

Cigarette smoking is da

Doves bend Arrows, zero in on cage title

ARNOLD ALMACEN/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU)

MULTITITLED ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI USED its vast experience to frustrate finals first-timer Arellano University, 74-61, in Game 1 of the 13th National Capital Region Athletic Association best-of-three men's basketball championship.

The Doves trampled on the Flaming Arrows in the fourth period as St. Francis moved within a win of securing their seventh NCRAA title.

St. Francis, in its 11th championship appearance in the league, goes for the jugular at 1 p.m. today at the San Andres gym.

"They (Flaming Arrows) were really trying to slow us down with their pressure and trapping defense," said longtime Doves coach Gabby Velasco. "*Pero*, attack *lang kami nang* attack. (We just kept on attacking)."

GAMES TODAY
(*San Andres gym*)
10 a.m.—PUP vs PMI (women)
11:30 a.m.—Arellano vs Olivarez (boys)
1 p.m.—St. Francis vs Arellano (men)

With beefy 6-foot-2 Raffy Ynion helping out underneath, Michael Rabor and Leomer Losentes starred in the biggest offensive run in the fourth to give St. Francis a 70-55 spread with only 3:13 left.

The Flaming Arrows came charging back from a nine-point halftime deficit, with Tylon Darjuan and Alfie Martinez leading a 13-0 run as Arellano forced two deadlocks, the last at 48-all.

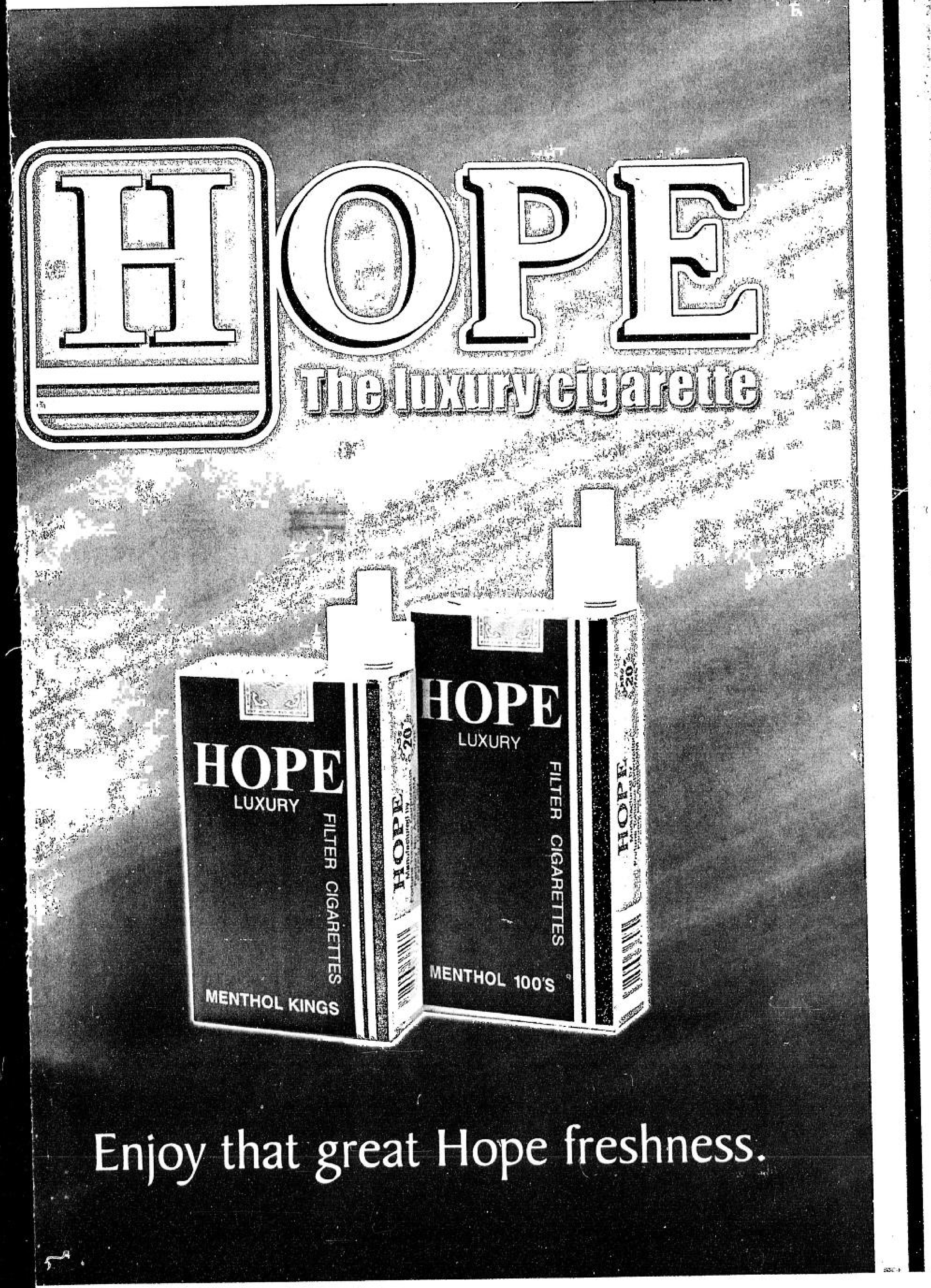
After Lee Boliver turned the ball over after a bad pass, the Doves unleashed a decisive 8-3 spurt in the third quarter. Martin Ilagan clustered six points and handed St. Francis a 56-51 edge at the end of the period.

Ilagan topscored for the Doves with 23 points while Filipino-American wingman Chris Pacana delivered 11 points.

Darjuan shot 12 points for the Flaming Arrows, while Martinez contributed 11.

In junior play, Erwin Punzalan had 21 points and Chris Sandoval banged in 14 points as St. Francis took third place with a 94-63 rout of Polytechnic University of the Philippines.

In the senior division's battle for third place, 6-foot-6 slotman Jeff Khalili hit seven of the game's last 12 points in the last three minutes to lead PUP to an 83-73 defeat of La Salle-Dasmariñas.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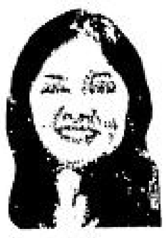
Lina poo-poohs poison letter

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

I WAITED ALMOST four hours yesterday for a return call from BAP president Joey Lina. I wanted his reaction to a document that sounded half-letter, half-press release which was e-mailed to me purportedly by the BAP National Congress.

The letter/press release contained grievances, which I thought Joey should address.

For example, it claimed that not a single member of the BAP "as recognized by Fiba has been consulted concerning the drafting of the alleged constitution of the new basketball NSA."

"While press releases from the group (of basketball stakeholders) announce that the constitution has been drafted and submitted for ratification by the stakeholders, and eventual acceptance by the POC, the general membership of BAP has not been consulted by the group. Not even ... Joey Lina has consulted the BAP national members, much less its executive committee."

I've cut the next few lines because these will cause so much dissension. What I've printed here is only a fraction of the entire document, which Joey believes is spurious since it has no attribution.

I know better, though, because I know where it came from.

However, I am trained not to reveal my source. Unless my credibility is questioned.

According to Joey, the drafting has not been completed. He said his plan was to present the completed amendment to the BAP executive board.

"If it is not accepted, *hindi 'yan matutuloy*. And it is not a new set of constitution and bylaws, amendments *lang yan*," Joey explained.

For awhile there, I smelled trouble brewing on the basketball horizon. I hope it has been nipped in the bud.

* * *

My media colleagues were surprised when they learned that ABS-CBN would be covering the Manny Pacquiao-Oscar Larios fight exclusively for television, and that Solar, the network's partner in Pacman's rematch against Erik Morales in Las Vegas last January, was no longer in the picture.

My scribe friends were even more surprised when they did not hear the slightest whimper from Solar, which had aired and marketed Pacquiao's last four fights

"Looks like *naisahan* ang Solar *d'yan, ah*. Wasn't it Solar that paved the way for ABS-CBN to be a part of the Pacquiao-Morales grudge match? It now turns out that that wasn't a smart move," said the assistant editor of a popular tabloid.

* * *

True, Solar officials remained cool about the takeover, if I heard it right.

One exec explained that ABS-CBN had negotiated with Pacquiao directly after the latter fired his US promoter Gary Shaw, the guy with whom Solar had been negotiating for Pacman's fights.

"Manny will now promote the fight himself," the Solar exec said.

"No hard feelings, no one's to blame. I guess it's a fact of life and nature of the business. Solar is committed to promote all boxing, not just Pacquiao, so we' ll move on and hope that in his next fight, we'll get the chance to cover Manny again. It's only a bit sad that Manny never offered nor talked to Solar.."

* * *

Meanwhile, ABS-CBN SVP for sports Peter Musngi has this to say: "ABS-CBN did not ease out anybody. Until last Friday, when the contract was signed, the network was not sure about clinching the rights to the fight. Manny Pacquiao chose from several offers from both local and international companies."

According to Peter, the offers included not only broadcast but marketing rights as well. "You can imagine the number of interested parties that queued up for the rights to this fight," he said.

MILO BEST advance listup

GOOD NEWS FOR MILO BEST CENTER BASKETball hopefuls. The country's most popular basketball school has announced the opening of advanced enrollment for this summer's program in four venues to enable young boys and girls to avoid the registration rush. Enrollment will be accepted at the Ateneo College covered courts (9 to 11 a.m.) and Notre Dame of Greater Manila (1 to 3 p.m.) on March 18 and Nestle Alabang (9:30 to 11:30 a.m.) on March 26. Interested parties may also sign up at the San Beda College athletics department and at N Zo Groom Center, ground floor of Century Park Hotel, Malate, Manila.

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Society Climber (10), Noble Win (1), Good Day (5), Marvelous Jay (2)
Race 2—(Qrt/Tri)—I Remain (7), King View (2), En Carta (5), Wild Orphan (6)
Race 3—Qrt/Tri)—Dancing Queen (2), King Of Fortune (1), King's Crow (6), Beautiful Aira (9)
Race 4—Qrt/Tri)—Ocean Cookie (4), Take a Strike (3), Chicklet (6), Daldalera/Garbo's Fancy (2)
Race 5—(Penta/Tri)—Eden's Quest (9), Empire Lady (10), Hurry Putt (8), West N Wild (4), Special Science (1)
Race 6—(Qrt/Tri)—Karma (5), Manila's Style (6), Clear Stone (4), Top O D'Lina (7)
Race 7—(Penta/Tri)—Rockwell (2), Reporter (4), Mas Que Nada (8) Scarab/Stingray (1), Casanova (5)
Race 8—Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Truly Impressive (1), Aminin (3), Heart C Jonna (9), Honoree (5), Look Of Love (12), Hurry Prince (14)

‘Big Four’ pared down, now it’s just the ‘Big One’

LOS ANGELES—TWELVE MONTHS AGO, THE buildup to the US Masters was dominated by animated talk of the Big Four.

Tiger Woods had triumphed twice on the PGA Tour but so, too, had fellow American Phil Mickelson.

Fijian Vijay Singh, recently deposed as world number one, had clinched the Sony Open in Hawaii while South Africa’s Ernie Els had claimed back-to-back European Tour titles in the Middle East.

At last, top-ranked Woods would have to contend with a genuine rivalry for golfing supremacy. The watching world waited with bated breath.

By the end of the year, though, Woods was firmly installed as the game’s leading player. Victories at the Masters and British Open lifted his major tally to 10 and six titles overall on the PGA Tour pushed his earnings for the season above $10 million.

His aura of dominance did not quite match the extraordinary level achieved during his astonishing run of form in 1999 and 2000, but it was not far off.

With this year’s Masters just over four weeks away, there is no talk of the Big Four, the Big Three or even the Big Two.

Woods, well out on his own now as the Big One, will journey to Augusta National early next month as the defending champion and overwhelming favorite to clinch the fifth Green Jacket of his career.

The 30-year-old American extended his lead over Singh to 9.15 points at the top of the world rankings following his one-stroke victory at the Doral Championship in Miami on Sunday.

Although he stumbled at the finish with bogeys at the last two holes, Woods played well enough over the week to secure the 48th PGA Tour title of his career and his third win of the year in just five starts.

Neither Mickelson nor Singh has triumphed this year while Els’ only victory came in a mediocre field at the European Tour’s Dunhill Championship in South Africa.

Worryingly for Woods’ rivals, all three of his victories have come with him not quite producing his “A” game. *AFP*

WOODS: No. 1 AP

Lakers go through ‘Bataan March’

LOS ANGELES—IF THERE WAS one thing for the Lakers to take away from Monday night’s game, after watching the San Antonio Spurs bury one 3-pointer after another, it was that making the playoffs as the eighth seed comes at a price.

The Lakers haven’t beaten the Spurs in seven regular-season games since Shaquille O’Neal was traded, and Monday was no different as San Antonio turned it up in the third quarter of a 103-96 victory at Staples Center.

It was significant because the Lakers and Spurs would meet in the first round if the playoffs started today. And if Michael Finley and Manu Ginobili are shooting like they were Monday, the Lakers could be looking at a quick exit.

Ginobili hit four 3-pointers in the third quarter and Finley hit four in the fourth quarter as the Spurs connected on 10 of 14 3-pointers in the second half and improved to 47-12 with their seventh straight win.

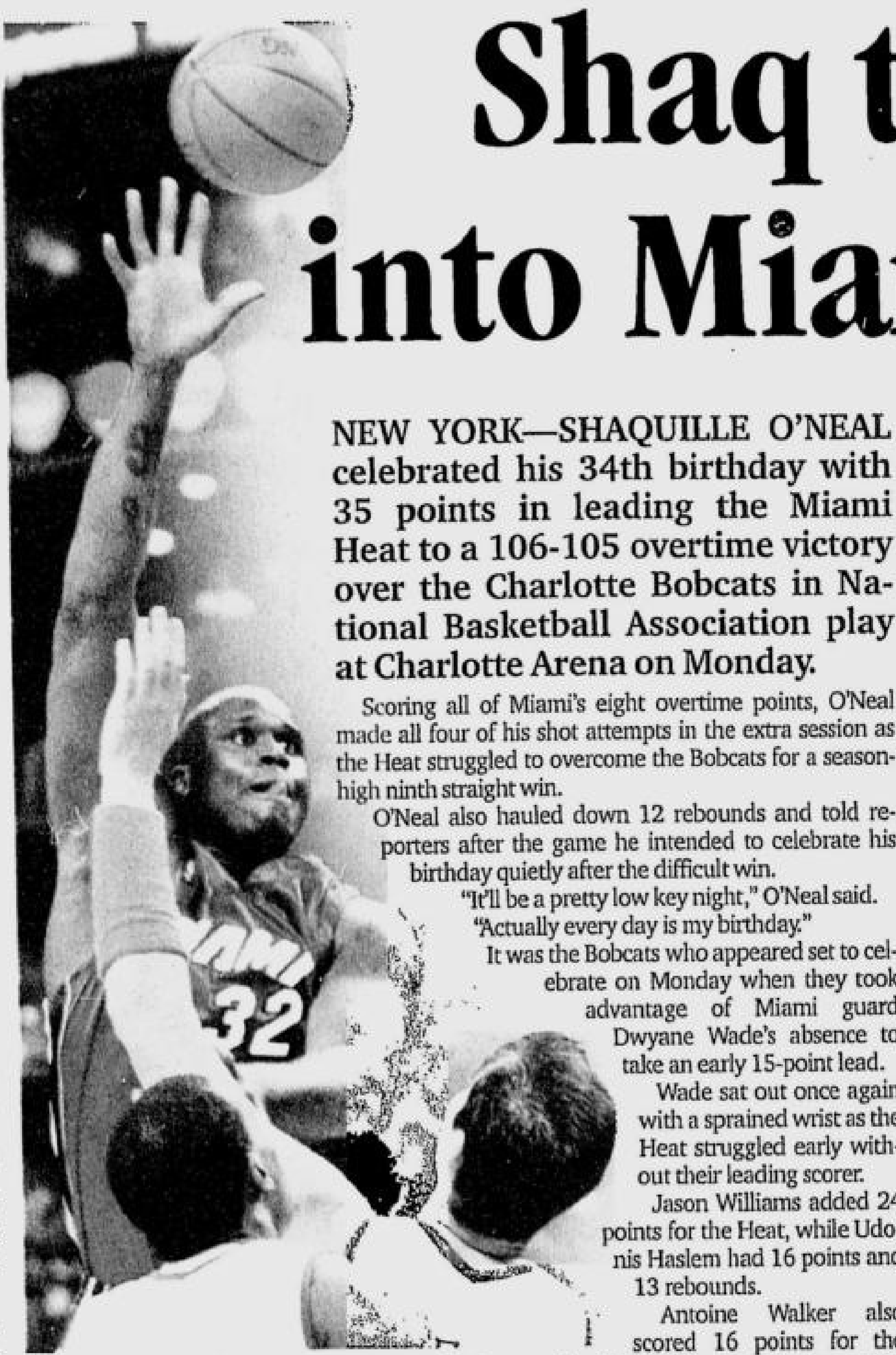
“We’ll see if Friday night they can shoot at the same level with the 3-point shots,” said Lakers coach Phil Jackson, whose team will face the Spurs again Friday night in San Antonio.

The Spurs turned what had been a 45-43 deficit at halftime into a 65-49 lead after only five minutes of the third quarter. Ginobili hit three consecutive 3-pointers as Lamar Odom gave him space to shoot and Parker kept finding him.

Jackson, meanwhile, drew the distinction between the 82-game regular season for the Spurs, calling it “just a dance to get to the playoffs” for the defending champions, and something else for a Lakers team struggling to stay above .500.

“For us, it’s a Bataan (Death) March,” Jackson quipped. *NYTNS*

Shaq turns OT into Miami party



O’NEAL: Birthday boy REUTERS

NEW YORK—SHAQUILLE O’NEAL celebrated his 34th birthday with 35 points in leading the Miami Heat to a 106-105 overtime victory over the Charlotte Bobcats in National Basketball Association play at Charlotte Arena on Monday.

Scoring all of Miami’s eight overtime points, O’Neal made all four of his shot attempts in the extra session as the Heat struggled to overcome the Bobcats for a season-high ninth straight win.

O’Neal also hauled down 12 rebounds and told reporters after the game he intended to celebrate his birthday quietly after the difficult win.

“It’ll be a pretty low key night,” O’Neal said. “Actually every day is my birthday.”

It was the Bobcats who appeared set to celebrate on Monday when they took advantage of Miami guard Dwyane Wade’s absence to take an early 15-point lead.

Wade sat out once again with a sprained wrist as the Heat struggled early without their leading scorer.

Jason Williams added 24 points for the Heat, while Udonis Haslem had 16 points and 13 rebounds.

Antoine Walker also scored 16 points for the Heat, who improved to 39-20, the second best record in the Eastern Conference behind the Detroit Pistons.

Miami coach Pat Riley told reporters that O’Neal was the difference in the game.

“He’s playing extremely well, we’re winning and he’s stepping up,” Riley said.

In Oklahoma City, reigning MVP Steve Nash injured his right ankle on Monday but Phoenix still won its 11th game in a row, as Boris Diaw scored 20 points and grabbed 12 rebounds while Brazil’s Leandro Barbosa, the NBA’s top 3-point shooter, scored 12 of his 15 points in the last seven minutes to spark the Suns past the New Orleans Hornets, 101-88.

Shawn Marion contributed 19 points and 16 rebounds for Phoenix, which improved to 42-17 and moved within three games of matching the longest win streak in club history.

Nash ignited a third-quarter rally by the Suns to overcome a 61-49 halftime deficit but hurt his ankle on a drive to the basket late in the period. He sank a free throw to lift the Suns within 71-67 but departed and did not return.

“We’ve played without Steve for stretches, but never at the end of a game,” Suns coach Mike D’Antoni said.

“(Barbosa) his a couple of huge threes and Boris was a rebounding machine,” said Nash, who watched the fourth quarter from the locker room.

In Denver, Carmelo Anthony scored 35 points as the Nuggets beat the Memphis Grizzlies, 115-101.

In East Rutherford, Mike Bibby scored 29 points and had 10 assists as the Sacramento Kings beat the New Jersey Nets, 109-84.

In Salt Lake City, Mehmet Okur scored 22 points as the Utah Jazz beat the Orlando Magic, 90-85. *Reuters, AFP*

NBA on TV: SOLAR SPORTS—Portland vs Dallas (9:30 a.m. live, replay March 9, 5:30 p.m.). SPORTS PLUS—New York vs Indiana (8 a.m. live, 7 p.m. replay); Houston vs Minnesota (9:30 p.m., replay March 9, 2:30 p.m.).

Seattle re-signs NFL star

SEATTLE—THE SEATTLE SEAhawks signed running back Shaun Alexander, to an eight-year, $62-million contract on Monday only days before the NFL’s most valuable player was to hit the open market as a free agent.

The new agreement is the richest deal signed by a running back and keeps Alexander, 28, with the team that drafted him in 2000.

Alexander rushed for 1,880 yards and scored a National Football League record 28 touchdowns to lead the Seahawks to their first Super Bowl berth.

“We’ve just signed one of best running backs in the history of the NFL to what is in essence a lifetime deal,” Seahawks President of Football Operations Tim Ruskell said at a news conference. “We want to keep our core (players) together.”

Alexander, who rushed for 95 yards in a 21-10 loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers in this year’s Super Bowl, would have joined other big-name running backs like Edgerrin James from the Indianapolis Colts and Jamal Lewis of the Baltimore Ravens, in the free agent market.

“It wasn’t really in my mind to leave here,” Alexander said. “To be the highest (paid) running back ever is quite an honor.” *Reuters*

Cubans get chance to prove themselves in World Classic

HAVANA—CUBA HAS WAITED DECADES TO test its amateur talent against their counterparts in US Major League Baseball. Now, the defending Olympic champion has its chance.

The World Baseball Classic is more than just a challenge for Cuba, it’s a pivotal moment.

“Everyone’s waiting to see what Cuba’s going to do, to see if it really knows how to play,” said pitcher Adiel Palma, the star of Cuba’s win over Australia in the 2004 Olympic final in Athens.

Palma was among 30 players leaving the communist island early Monday for Puerto Rico, where Cuba plays its first World Baseball Classic game Wednesday against Panama. But some wonder if all those players will return with the team, or whether a few might try to defect and land a lucrative contract in the United States the way Jose Contreras, Livan Hernandez and Orlando “El Duque” Hernandez did several years ago.

Cuba is grouped with Panama, the Netherlands and Puerto Rico in the first round of the Classic, which began last week in Japan.

Cuba has defeated Panama seven times, the Netherlands four times and Puerto Rico three times in international and regional competitions.

The difference is that Cuba will face MLB players on a world stage in games that count for the first time since 1961, when professional baseball ended on the island. *AP*

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE

Wednesday March 8 2006

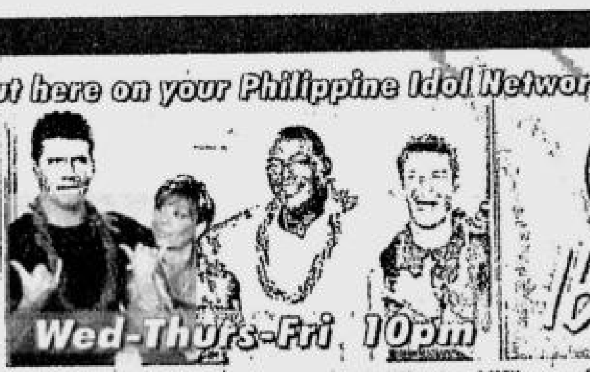
Who will be next? Find out here on your Philippine Idol Network

American Idol

Wed-Thurs-Fri 10pm

ABC Iba Tayo!

ClickTheCity.com



Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			WNCAA (Rerun)		PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	American Idol			Billboard On-Air
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema			Pasion de Amor	Little Amy	Mr Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins		TV Patrol World	Gulong Ng Palad	Sa Piling Mo	Princess Lulu	Pinoy Big Brother		S.O.C.O.			Insider
AXN		Mondo Magic	Boarding Pass	Next Action Star		The Amazing Race (Season IX)		Cold Squad (Season V)		Numb3rs (Season I)		30 Seconds To Fame	Samsung Sports World	The Amazing Race (Season IX)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 6)		CSI: Miami (Season II)	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Tom & Jerry Show		Baby Looney Tunes	Codename Kids Next Door	Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Energy Bomb	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinemax	Dave				Roustabout			Sweet Poison (6:15 PM)				Nowhere To Run			Cape Fear				Beastmaster III: The Eye Of Braxus
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Disney Channel	Mr Bean The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			American Dragon		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Pro Billiards 2003 Women's Tournament of Champs Uncasville CT USA		Pool Mosconi Cup '02		X-Games Files '02	X-Games Files '02	Motorsport Asia	Pool/ Snooker World Pool League '03 Poland			Pool/ Snooker World Pool League '03 Poland		Motorsport Asia	Pool/ Snooker Premier Snooker League '04 England				Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Average Joe		Change of Heart	Eliminidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Veronica Mars		Beauty & The Geek		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	Marriage Works in Christ	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Faith In Motion	Adventures In Odyssey	EWTN Original Productions	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Defending Life	EWTN Gallery	In The Heart Of The Church	Mother Angelica Live Classics		One In Their Hearts	Catholic Social Teaching	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	Carpenter's Shop	Our Father's Plan	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	First Love Of A Royale Prince		Dragonball Z	Great Teacher Onizuka	La Robe de Mariage	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Encantadia	My Name Is Kim Sam Soon	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Nuts Entertainment			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched	Family Law III		Family Plan (3:50 PM)			Ladies Man	Bewitched	The Nanny	Strong Medicine		Judging Amy		Fast Food High			Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		Strong Medicine
HBO		She's Out Of Control				Silent Rage			Assassins (6:45 PM)					Innerspace				Live Nude Girls	
Hero TV	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Beyblade	Crush Gear Turbo	Angelic Layer	Tokyo Underground	Metal Fighter Miku	Naruto	Memo de Pon	Inuyasha	Yu-Gi-Oh	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Tokyo Underground	Metal Fighter Miku
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Lifestyle		Home Shopping Network		ME TV		Japan Video Topics		Up Close And Personal	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show David Letterman		Heat		Velocity		X-Men	Street Smarts	Mad TV		That 70s Show	My Name Is Earl	The Late Show David Letterman		The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Premium Blend	Primetime Glick	Chappelle Show
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Motto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Wolfgang Puck's	E! Entertainment Special		Style Star	Life & Style		Fine Living Special		Intimate Portrait	
MTV Philippines	Jams	Whatever Things	MTV Hits		The 70's House	Pop Inc		2006 MAA Nominee Specials	MTV Hits			Homecoming	Get Spotted	TRL		Viva La Bam	Laguna Beach	Get Hitch'd	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	OPM MYX	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	MYXILOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Live!		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic	Wild Family Secrets	Hunter Hunted		Interpol Investigates		Science Times		Top 5 - Mysterious Universe		Wow!		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Hunter Hunted		Interpol Investigates	
NBN		Value Vision		New Life TV Shopping		Teledyaryo	Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Talk Ko 'To		Tinig ng Bayan (Live)		Teledyaryo				Krusada Kontra Krimen		Bantay OCW With Susan K	Cue Masters
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	Hey Arnold!	Rocket Power	Four Eyes	My Life As A Teenage Robot	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	My Life As A Teenage Robot	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Balweg				Pamoda				Enteng Ang Bias Ko Ni Eye				Bantay Mo Anak Hahabangan				Manalo Manalo Mahal Kita
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin		Zentrix	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Mores		Love At Aegean Sea	Intno	Mars	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	Now Na!		News On Q	Balikbayan		MINT (Music Interactive)	
RPN 9	TV Shopping					Global Window		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	Iron Chef		Three Wishes		Extreme Make-Over		Newswatch Now	Basketball Show	Money Talk	
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping		SBN Music Video		Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		SBN Music Video			
Solar Sports		IBF German Open '04 WS Final		2006 Adelaide Open SF1 Soria vs. Hrbaty			2006 Adelaide Open SF2 Malisse vs. Berdych		NBA Jam	Sagupaan	Boxing Cotto vs. Brando	Sportsdesk					Sportsdesk	Philippine Open Semifinals	
Sports Plus				Arena Football Los Angeles @ Orlando						NBA Game New York @ Indiana					NBA Game Houston @ Minnesota				
Star Movies		Good Boy! (2:55 PM)			Tuck Everlasting (4:25 PM)			King Arthur (6:55 PM)				The 78th Annual Academy Awards							
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Angel		American Idol 2006		Star News Asia	Friends (Series 10)	American Idol 2006		Medical Investigation		Smallville		Friends (Series 10)	American Idol 2006
Studio 23								Batman Beyond	Spirits	Wazzup Wazzup	The Amazing Race Family Edition		CSI (8:20 PM)	Life As We Know It (9:10 PM)		News Central	Oprah		Just Shoot Me

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

Text us your feedback: inquirer ent name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

INQUIRER
EXCLUSIVE

MANAY Ichu Maceda: "It's the President's friends' turn to work." RUDY ESPERAS

Maceda leaves int'l film fest commission

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

MA. AZUCENA "MANAY Ichu" Maceda has resigned as chair of the International Film Festival Committee (Iffcom) effective this month.

Iffcom, which is under the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP), is tasked to help local films penetrate the global market by assisting producers in subtitling and buying new prints for movies bound for film festivals abroad. Producers can also reimburse travel and hotel expenses through the Iffcom.

Maceda told INQUIRER Entertainment that she's leaving because she's a staunch oppositionist, but that she's proud of Iffcom's accomplishments.

According to the FDCP web site: "Since the start of Iffcom's operations in 1996, "a total of 62 films have received grants ... [about] P20 million have been released to almost 19 production outfits."

MACEDA/ A2-4

Anti-porn group hits MTRCB

By Marinel R. Cruz

THE MOVIE AND TELEVISION REVIEW CLASsification Board (MTRCB) stands by the R-18 rating it has given to "Brokeback Mountain," the subject of a complaint from an anti-pornography group.

"All the issues raised in the complaint are covered by the R-18 criteria," MTRCB chief Marissa Laguardia said in a phone interview on Monday after INQUIRER Entertainment sought her reaction.

The Philippine Alliance Against Pornography Inc. sent a statement to the INQUIRER objecting to the R-18 ("For Adults Only") rating given to the award-winning film and insisting that it "should be banned in this country."

In the statement, PAAP spokesperson Aldo P. Filomeno enumerated the "questionable" scenes—"nudity, torrid French kissing, perverted sex acts between homosexuals and vivid display of women's breasts."

The PAAP called on the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund, and United Nation's Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, to conduct a probe on "violations committed by the MTRCB" of human and children's rights.

Laguardia replied: "They can ask help from any agency. The decisions of the MTRCB will prevail because these are based on the Board's implementing rules and regulations."

An R-18 rating is based on a movie's treatment of seven factors—theme, violence, language, nudity, sex, horror, illegal drugs.

Laguardia noted that the MTRCB handbook allows a movie to use strong expletives and sexual reference, "provided these are

ANTI-PORN/ A2-4

Sporty Summer
SIDEWALK TRIPPING
light-weight skateboards in hip & cool designs
get a chance to WIN one of these Cool Prizes!
March 1 - April 30
Every P500 single receipt purchase of any item at Toy Kingdom or Toyworld entitles you to one (1) raffle coupon*
*Two (2) raffle coupons when you use your SM Advantage card
We've got it all for you!
TOY WORLD
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QUIAPO • CUBAO • HARRISON • NORTH EDSA • STA. MESA • ORTIGAS • LAS PIÑAS • BACOOR • FAIRVIEW • MANILA • BICUTAN • PAMPANGA • MANDURRIAO
DELGADO • CEBU • DAVAO • CAGAYAN DE ORO • BATANGAS • DASMARIÑAS • LUCENA • BAGUIO • MARILAO • SUCAT • SAN LAZARO • STA. ROSA

OPENING TODAY

Coed Scandal

Stars Jennifer Lee, Avi Siwa, Ryan Eigenmann

Directed by Robert Quebral

This digital film from Viva is about young people experimenting with voyeurism and kinky sex. A male university student (Eigenmann) goads his naïve girlfriend (Hot Babe Lee) to take part in an amateur sex video. She was reluctant at first, until he brings in a willing co-star (Siwa), who completes the *ménage à trois*.

Casanova

Stars Heath Ledger, Sienna Miller, Jeremy Irons, Oliver Platt

Directed by Lasse Hallstrom

In this latest version of the legendary lover's life, Giacomo Casanova (Ledger) meets his ultimate romantic foil (Miller) who refuses to fall for his charms. Wooing the unattainable, he learns a lesson on "the power of true love." Says Josh Bell of Las Vegas Weekly: "Like your average silly sex comedy ... [it's] fitfully amusing... More 'Saved by the Bell' than 'Shakespeare in Love.'"

16 Blocks

Stars Bruce Willis, Dante "Mos Def" Smith, David Morse

Directed by Richard Donner

Two mismatched macho men is forced to rely on each other to survive. A burnt-out cop (Willis) is assigned to transport a crooked witness (Smith) to a nearby courthouse. That 16-block trip becomes the longest ride of their lives, as they meet danger at every corner. Sheri Linden of Hollywood Reporter says: "This tale of a cop and a baker running for their lives wants to have its cake and eat it, too." Joshua Tyler of Cinemablend.com wonders: "Anyone else have the words 'Die Hard 3' flashing on and off in their head?"

Last Holiday

Stars Queen Latifah, LL Cool J, Gerard Depardieu

Directed by Wayne Wang

After being given three weeks to live, a reticent sales clerk throws all caution to the wind and travels to Europe. She learns to shed her inhibitions, only to discover that she had been misdiagnosed. Eleanor Ringel Gillespie of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution says this remake of a 1950 Alec Guinness film is "a cheesy crowd-pleaser ... a pleasant trifle made far better by [Latifah's] effortless charm and expansive spirit." Jessica Reaves of Chicago Tribune thinks "it's an energetic remake."

OPENING/ A2-6

All the movies you want to see on the big screen
NOW SHOWING at the Star Group of Malls
starmall EDSA - SHAW Tel No 726 6160
3: Final Destination 3
4: BrokeBack Mountain
5: Fearless
METROPOLIS ALABANG star Tel No 850 4285
1: Close To You
2: Nasaan si Francis?
3: Fearless
4: The Maid
Everyday Family Day at StarMalls!
Every Tuesdays Stand-Up Comedy, Every Fridays Live Acoustic Bands at Cuba Libre Bar Starmall Edsa
Mondays to Thursdays Live Bands, Every Fridays Stand-Up Comedy at Mark's KTV Metropolis
Itchyworms (Mar 5) 6 Cycle Mind (Mar 12) Barbie Almabis (Mar 17) Metropolis Alabang
Manila Philharmonic Orchestra (Mar 11) Rachel Ann Go (Mar 12) Barbie Almabis (Mar 25) Starmall Edsa

Babu AHHCHOO!

Performer Ricci Chan prevents allergic rhinitis from stealing the show

Bless you! "I get the sniffles and sneeze 30, 40, to 50 times and more frequently with allergic rhinitis than with the common cold," Ricci Chan explains. When left untreated, allergic rhinitis can lead to worsening of asthma, sinusitis, ear infections, and other complications.

Ricci Chan rehearses his newest stage musicale. With such a busy schedule, Ricci can't allow allergic rhinitis indeed to get in the way.

Thespian Ricci Chan is boundless, creative energy personified.

Bitten by the acting bug since he was in third grade, he has appeared in countless stage productions and is best known for his performances as Angel in *Rent*, Joshua in *Temptation Island*, and in *All about Men: Penis Talks*.

His latest incarnation is the hilarious Didi in *Carlo Vergara's Zsazsa Zaturnnah: Ze Muzikal*, showing at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. It's a laugh-out-loud take on the adventures of a *parlorista* turned bombshell superhero! Such a demanding role requires daily rehearsals stretching late into the evening.

Zsazsa's showcases his comic timing and powerful singing voice. His vocal chords constantly have to be in tip-top shape. Thus, suffering from the symptoms of allergic rhinitis is not an option.

"I've had allergic rhinitis since, like, forever," he jokes. "It's a condition that runs in the family."

Allergic rhinitis happens when there is a swelling in the nose lining or nasal membrane caused by exposure to allergens such as house dust, pollen, animal dander, or pollution. Allergens are substances, usually made of protein, that trigger the symptoms of allergic rhinitis such as sneezing, runny or clogged nose and itchy, watery, red eyes. A person who suffers from allergic rhinitis may sneeze repeatedly. The sneezing fits seem to follow a pattern and may happen almost daily, particularly upon waking up in the morning.

For Ricci, house dust and pollution are the main culprits behind his allergic rhinitis attacks. House dust mites are very tiny bugs that feed on skin humans shed everyday. When their droppings are inhaled by allergic persons, an allergic reaction can be triggered leading to symptoms such as sneezing, runny or clogged nose and itchy, watery eyes. Pollution in the air contains some of the most common outdoor allergens.

"I get the sniffles and sneeze 30, 40, to 50 times and more frequently with allergic rhinitis than with the common cold," he explains.

"But there's more to allergic rhinitis than that. My eyes grow red, watery, and itchy. My throat also starts to itch, which can make me feel awkward while acting and singing." "I'm more scared of allergic rhinitis than the common cold," he adds.

When left untreated, allergic rhinitis can lead to worsening of asthma, sinusitis, ear infections, and other complications.

Ricci steers clear of polluted, dust-filled places as much as possible. And for relief from the bothersome, non-stop AHHCHOOS caused by allergic rhinitis,

Ricci keeps Benadryl AH (Diphenhydramine Hcl) capsule on hand. With Benadryl AH (Diphenhydramine Hcl) capsule, he can now enjoy a much-need break from sneezing with a runny nose and itchy, watery eyes.

And with allergic rhinitis out of the way, Ricci is always on performance level!

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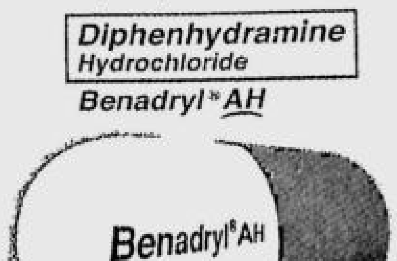

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Sandara's secret woes

By Nini Valera

BEHIND THE *KRUNG-KRUNG* (DITZY) image of Sandara Park lurks a tortured young woman who claims to be the victim of an abusive father.

Sandara, 21, whose success in local entertainment has been phenomenal, told INQUIRER Entertainment on Monday that she has been receiving letters from a Korean national who claims her father owes him millions of pesos. She said the letter writer is collecting from her and threatening to destroy her if she doesn't pay up.

She said she received last December a copy of the promissory note that she was supposed to have signed as her father's co-debtor. She denied being party to the transaction, and insisted that her signature on the document had been forged. In fact, she said, she had never met the man.

"We received the first letter by fax," Sandara said in almost perfect Filipino. "It was sent to YG, a talent agency in Korea that I was supposed to sign up with."

Several more demand letters arrived early this year at Star Magic, management arm of ABS-CBN, of which Sandara is an exclusive contract star.

The network's legal department wanted to reply to the letters but did not find a return address, according to Sandara's handler, Anna Esguerra.

Meanwhile, Sandara admitted that she had not communicated with her father for almost a year now.

She said the last time she saw him was about a year ago, during the promo period of her movie, "Can This Be Love."

"He came to the hotel where we were staying and asked for money," Sandara related. "I had just returned from Korea and was staying in a hotel first because we had given up the condominium we used to rent."

Not the first

She said her father had found out where she was staying through their driver.

This was not the first time her father had shaken her for cash, according to Sandara, who became the family's breadwinner since her father had left them a year ago.

"I gave him money once," she said. "He promised to pay me back, but he did not. He returned later to ask for more money, but I did not give him any more. Then we started receiving the threatening letters."

PARK: Trouble behind the sparkling smile.

She revealed that she became aware that something was wrong with their family when she was only 12.

"I would see my father beating up my mother," she said. "When he was drunk, he would always beat her. He also did not give us enough money to survive. He gave money for food and tuition fees, but that was all."

When Sandara joined the talent search "Star Circle Quest" (in 2004), she was lucky to finish among the top four despite her apparent lack of talent in singing and acting, and her inadequate grasp of Filipino.

Lucky

But Sandara was lucky.

Movie fans loved her quaint charm and adored her porcelain beauty. Every movie she made with then love team Hero Angeles broke box office records. Her record albums of novelty songs also turned gold almost instantly.

"I don't feel that I'm lucky anymore," she said in an attempt to crack a weak joke, referring to her new movie, "D' Lucky Ones," with real life boyfriend Joseph Bitangcol.

"If I were lucky, I'd have more movies. I won't be having these problems."

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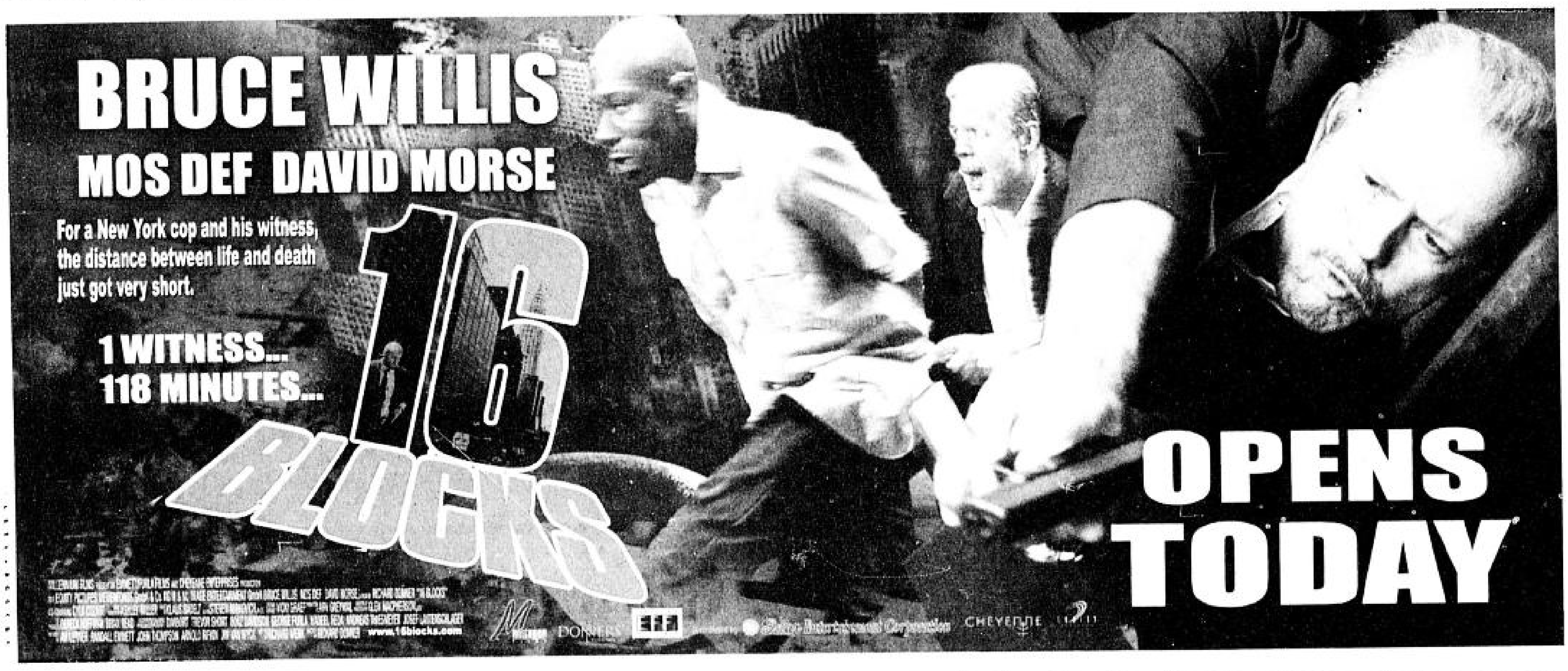

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G4 GLORIETTA 4	CASANOVA	YOURS, MINE & OURS	THX 16 BLOCKS GUARANTEED SEATS	CAPOTE	FEARLESS	DATE MOVIE	LAST HOLIDAY
GB1 GREENBELT 1	DATE MOVIE	CASANOVA					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	THX DATE MOVIE GUARANTEED SEATS	THX 16 BLOCKS GUARANTEED SEATS	LAST HOLIDAY GUARANTEED SEATS	YOURS, MINE & OURS GUARANTEED SEATS	CASANOVA GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	THX 16 BLOCKS	CASANOVA	DATE MOVIE	LAST HOLIDAY	YOURS, MINE & OURS		
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'Idol' female finalists hang on for dear life

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

LAST WEDNESDAY, THE FEMALE FINALISTS on "American Idol" were down to 10, and all of them gave their performances everything they had.

In the jurors' opinion, quite a number of the girls were at risk, mainly because they picked the wrong songs to showcase their vocal range.

The jurors—**Simon Cowell**, in particular—fretted that the viewing and voting public would find most of Wednesday's performances predictable, and thus might not support their earnest efforts to survive to the tilt's next round.

We don't know about that. The show's viewers may not be as readily and shallowly impressionable as the jurors think.

Looking back to past editions of "American Idol," the winners have been a varied lot, each with a different kind of vocal strength and performance style.

So, it appears that the show's viewers and voters aren't necessarily bowled over by sheer vocal prowess and drop-dead performances, and can in fact appreciate quieter and more sensitive renditions from finalists who don't want to go the way of all flash and musical bravado.

In any case, as far as we were concerned, **Katherine McPhee** didn't do as blandly as the jurors believed. She came across like a **Catherine Zeta-Jones** who could really sing, and we trust that she'll stay with the show for more weeks to come.

Another standout, **Lisa Tucker**, also sang a relatively quiet song, but acquitted herself well, despite the fact that, at 16, she's one of the youngest finalists this year.

Paris Bennet, also 16 years young, chose to project herself as much older, eliciting criticism from jurors Cowell, **Paula Abdul** and **Randy Jackson**, who urged her to act and sing her age. But Paris is so strong vocally that she appears to be in little danger of being eliminated quite so soon.

Lanky and lovely **Ayla Brown** was faulted for being too technical in her performance, but she's too impressive a talent to fall by the wayside so early.

Kellie Pickler is now coming across as winningly as **Carrie Underwood** did last year. Since Underwood topped the 2005 tilt, Kellie should also do well this year.

Finally, **Mandisa** brought down the house with her rich, strong voice and enormous vocal range, so she too should be a survivor.

Solo recital

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD pianist **Hannah Frances Hua** will be presented in her first solo recital at 4 p.m. on March 11 at the Francisco Santiago Hall of Equitable PCI Bank. Hannah will perform Naydan's "Concerto in C" and Mozart's "Concerto in F, KV37" with the Manila Symphony Orchestra II, under the baton of Prof. **Arturo Molina.**

The concert is under the aegis of the MCO Foundation's "Young Artists Recital Series." Call 8407000 local 2630.

Jasmine Trias

THE "**JASMINE TRIAS**" album has been certified gold by the Philippine Association of the Recording Industry. It also won the Album of the Year plum at the recent Hawaii Music Awards, and Jasmine copped the Best New Artist trophy. Jasmine will perform at Glorietta-Makati at 5 p.m. on March 11, and at Robinsons Place-Ermita on March 12.

Kuh and Pops

"LET'S Talk About Love," **Kuh Ledesma** and **Pops Fernandez's** hit Valentine show, will be restaged on March 10 at 9 p.m. at the Mandarin Oriental Manila's Captain's Bar. Call 7508888 or 5517253.

Peter Noone

ON March 17, "Hermin's Hermits Starring Peter Noone: Live All Over the World" will be staged at the Araneta Coliseum. During its heyday, Herman's Hermits sold over 60 million records, with 23 top hits and 14 singles and seven albums turning gold.

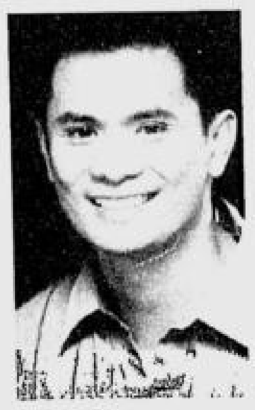
At Araneta Coliseum, the group will perform its hit tunes, including "There's A kind Of Hush," "Wonderful World," "Can't You Hear My Heartbeat," "Silhouettes" and "Listen People."

On March 18, the group performs in a dinner show at the Manila Hotel.

ROUNDUP

VILORIA

REM ZAMORA



ALCASID

Separated at birth?

VIGAN CITY—World Boxing Council light flyweight champion Brian Viloria said a biopic is in the offing.

"I am talking with some writers," Viloria said. And he is sure who should portray him: "Ogie Alcasid."

Asked why, he said: "He looks like me."

"He looks more like Jay-R (another Fil-Am singer)," said Jellie Faralan, a student of the University of Northern Philippines where Viloria was met by shrieking coeds when his convoy passed by there on Monday.

Viloria could relate to Alcasid for two more reasons: their height (the champ stands at 5'4") and their singing.

Viloria told the INQUIRER he is planning to release his own record "soon."

"I [also] love to write," he said. "Poetry. Lyrics. Thoughts. I want to write a novel someday."

Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

RENEE "Bridget" Zellweger

Bridget Jones, HK

HONG KONG—Hong Kong TV station TVB plans to adapt "Bridget Jones' Diary" for the small screen, a news report said last week.

The show—to be broadcast in Cantonese—will start shooting in May and star local actors Woo Han-yi and Alex Fong, the Chinese news website Sina.com reported.

Woo will play the character inspired by Bridget Jones, and Fong her philandering boss, the role portrayed by Hugh Grant in the movie version, the report said.

TVB spokesperson Tina Tse would not confirm it. *AP*

Another 'last'?

HONG KONG—Jet Li's new action movie revolves around an FBI agent who tries to avenge the death of his partner by an assassin, and costars Jason Statham from "The Transporter" and "The Italian Job," the Chinese star's official website announced.

JET Li

In "Rogue," Li portrays the assassin hunted by the FBI agent, played by Statham, according to a production fact sheet published on Lee's website.

Philip G. Atwell will direct the movie and Corey Yuen will design its action sequences. Filming is due to start in March in Vancouver, Canada, according to the website.

Li earlier announced that his recent movie "Fearless" would be his last. *AP*

Mom Travolta

LOS ANGELES—He was the teenage prince of disco in "Saturday Night Fever," the dreamy leader of a high school gang in "Grease" and a mob hit man in "Pulp Fiction." Now John Travolta will be playing a mom.

The 52-year-old actor has been cast as Edna Turnblad, the mother of an aspiring teenage dancer, in an upcoming feature film adaptation of the Broadway hit musical "Hairspray," which was based on the 1988 cult movie of the same name, distributor New Line Cinema said on Friday.

Production on the film is set to begin this fall for a potential summer 2007 release, according to New Line, a unit of Time Warner Inc. *Reuters*

Pope Jon

WARSAW, Poland—Oscar-winning actor Jon Voight said last week that the ring he kept from his role playing the late Pope John Paul II helps him be a better person.

"I feel him, I think: 'Jon, if you are wearing this ring you'd better think a little better,' Voight told a news conference Friday, as the movie "Pope John Paul II" opened in cinemas across Poland, the late pope's homeland.

Voight said the flat, gold-colored ring with a figure of St. Peter on was given to him after the movie finished shooting.

"I think I will probably wear it for the rest of my life," he said. *AP*

Desperadas

MIAMI—More "Desperate Housewives"—in Spanish and Portuguese.

Hoping to replicate the worldwide success of the Golden Globe-winning ABC drama, Buena Vista International Television Latin America has announced plans to produce four local Latin American editions, each with its own cast and cultural flavor.

THE ORIGINAL "housewives"

Spanish versions of the show will air in Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador, and a Portuguese version in Brazil.

"The script of the series perfectly fit the profile of what the Latin American audience looks for," said Fernando Barbosa, senior vice president of BVITLA. "It looks similar to the *telenovelas*."

Each new version will be filmed on one set in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and follow the format of the US original, but with adaptations to reflect each cast's local culture.

For example, a plumber is very unlikely to live in such type of neighborhood, Barbosa said, "so we'll change that profession."

Production on the Argentine version begins April 15 in Buenos Aires, and the first episodes could air in Argentina as early as June or July, Barbosa said. *AP*

Online fixing

LOS ANGELES—The US Justice Department says it has launched an inquiry into possible price fixing in the burgeoning online music industry.

Two record industry officials characterized the inquiry as essentially identical to one launched in December by New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, who subpoenaed several record companies searching for information on wholesale prices that music labels charge for downloadable digital music files.

The Justice Department would not name the companies it has targeted.

None of the four major labels—Vivendi Universal's Universal Music Group, Warner Music Group Corp., Sony BMG Music Entertainment and Britain's EMI Music—has responded to the news. *AP*

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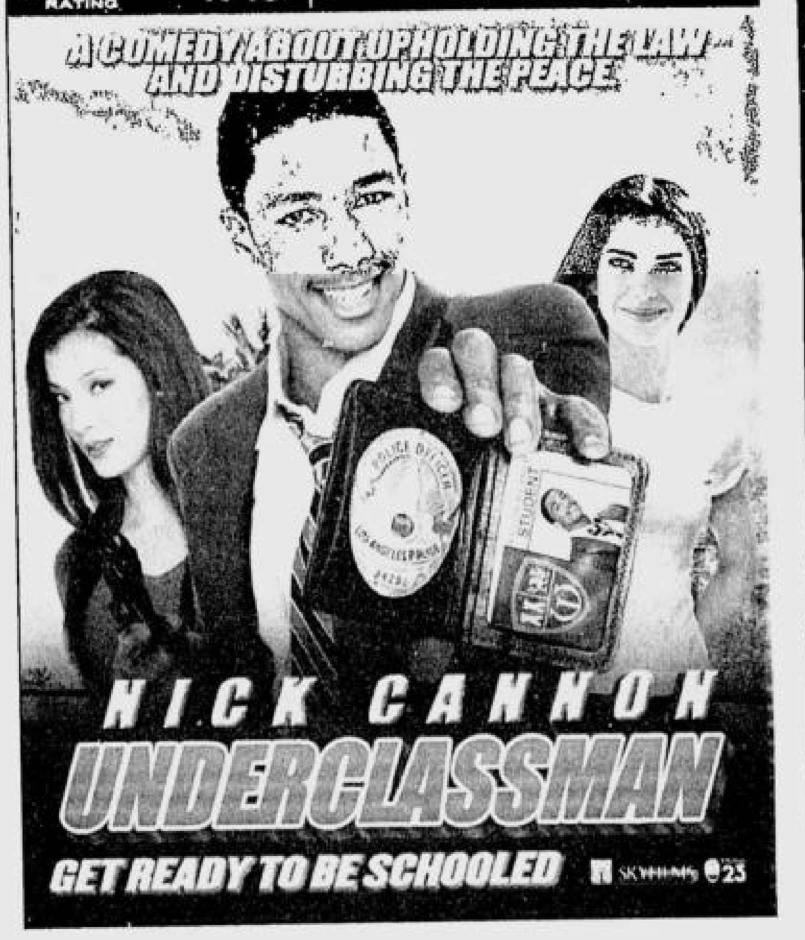

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THE FEARLESS 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40	CASANOVA 2:00 / 4:30 / 7:00 / 9:30	BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2 3:00 / 7:20 FINAL DESTINATION 3 12 50 / 5.10 / 9 30	ONLY P120 ADMISSION GLOBE PLATINUM P249/P299

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4 TIGER BLADE	5 THE DARK 11:50 / 2:00 / 4:10 / 6:20 / 8:30	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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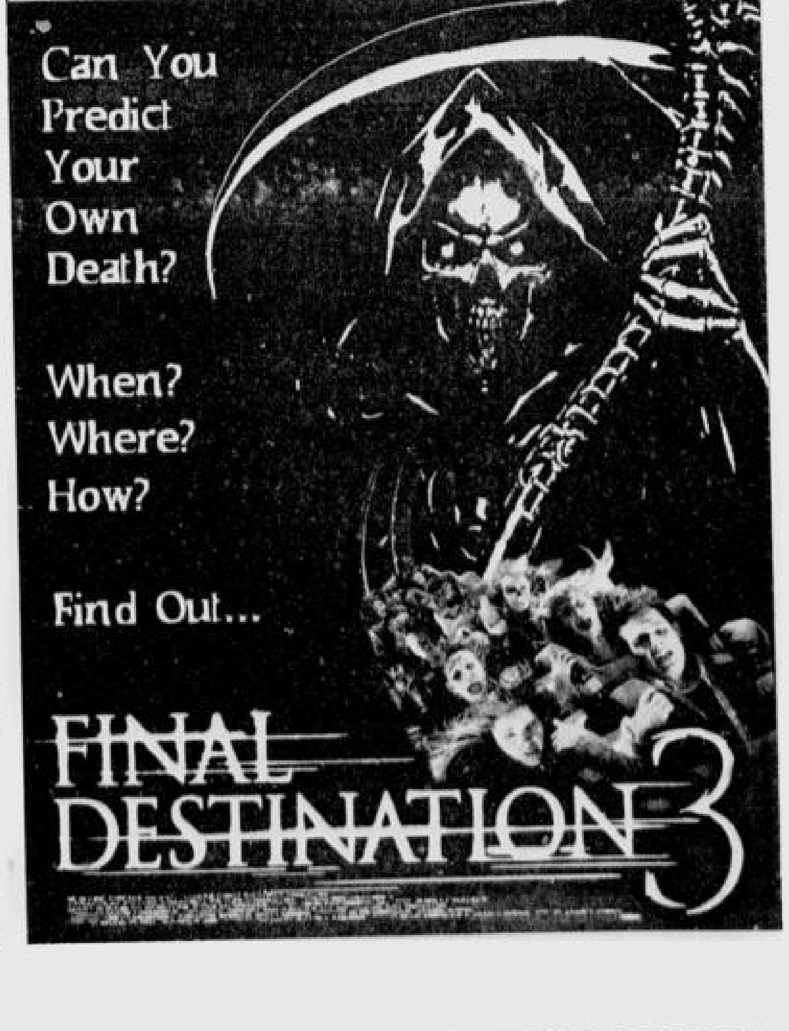

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FINAL DESTINATION 3

Maceda leaves int'l ...

From page A2-1

How would you assess your stint at the Iffcom?

We've accomplished a lot, but it's still not enough. We have to change a lot of things—like our work system. We also need capital and government support. Local producers should seriously look into cable and theatrical sales abroad.

"I'M willing to help my replacement," says Manay Ichu. RUDY ESPERAS

You experienced selling abroad when you brought Mike de Leon's "Batch '81" to Cannes in 1982.

Pierre Rissient, Lino Brocka's friend, helped me. I set up a small *merienda* get-together with the European directors so they'd meet Mike. I must have spent $10,000 for that trip. But I sold "Batch '81" to a German distributor for $10,000.

The Film Academy of the Philippines is putting up a Philippine booth in the Hong Kong Film and TV Market this month. It's also supported by the FDCP.

That's good! My dream is to have a Philippine booth in the Cannes and Los Angeles Film Market ...

FDCP chair Jacky Atienza said it's important to pool our resources.

I really hope he does well. There's a lot to be done.

Why are you resigning then?

I don't like GMA *e*. Hahaha. I feel that I have no place in this government. We all have our own time to serve. Now, it's the time of those close to President Macapagal-Arroyo to work hard.

Do you think politics stunt the local movie industry's progress?

I don't think it has affected the movie industry. I'm resigning out of *delicadeza*. I cannot imagine going to Malacañang to ask for anything.

We only availed of two-years' worth of our five-year subsidy. We still have about P1.3 million left. Whoever will replace me should work hard to get new funding.

I'm willing to help my replacement. Even in my deathbed, I'll do everything for the industry.

Anti-porn group hits MTRCB

From page A2-1

necessary to the story-line and character development."

No theme is off-limits ... "but lewd and explicit images of aroused genitalia, penetration, masturbation are not acceptable."

The R-18 classification allows "strong psychological horror and scary scenes" but prohibits "nudity meant simply to titillate."

Violence is allowed as well, the manual adds, but not films that "glorify or glamorize violence, satisfy craving for gratuitous violence, and detailed and prolonged images of sexual and other kinds of violence."

Blasphemy

"The PAAP is not discriminat ing the gay sector," Filomeno said in the statement. "But 'Brokeback Mountain' is a blasphemy."

Laguardia argued: "The movie is beautifully crafted. The characters' sexual preference were merely insinuated."

The Golden Globe Best Picture winner, starring Heath Ledge and Jack Gylenhaal, is now on its third week in local theaters.

Filomeno reiterated his group's earlier objection to the R-13 rating given to Mikael Håfstrom's "Derailed" and Steven Spielberg's "Munich."

He stressed: "The MTRCB should protect children from any form of abuse."

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09:00 LMF / 10:45 END
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02 15 FS / 02 45 MF
04.50 / 06.55
08.25LFS / 09 00 LMF / 10 30 END

SM MEGACINEMA
1 16 BLOCKS
10 15FS / 10:45 MF
01.00 / 03:15 / 05:30
07.45 / 09.30LFS /
04 30 LMF / 08:00 END
2 CASANOVA
3 FEARLESS
4 RESERVED
5 LAST HOLIDAY
6 YOURS, MINE & OURS
7 THE DARK
8 UNDERCLASS MAN
9 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
10 FINAL DESTINATION 3
11 TIGER BLADE
12 CLOSE TO YOU

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 CASANOVA
2 LAST HOLIDAY
3 THE DARK
4 RESERVED
5 16 BLOCKS
6 FINAL DESTINATION 3
7 YOURS, MINE & OURS
8 FEARLESS

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 FEARLESS
2 16 BLOCKS
3 YOURS, MINE & OURS
4 SYRIANA

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
THE DARK
YOURS, MINE & OURS
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
FINAL DESTINATION 3
FEARLESS
UNDERCLASS MAN
16 BLOCKS
CLOSE TO YOU
LAST HOLIDAY
AEON FLUX
I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU
MEMOIRS OF GEISHA

SM CITY STA. MESA
FEARLESS
THE DARK
CASANOVA
YOURS, MINE & OURS
16 BLOCKS
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
FINAL DESTINATION 3
LAST HOLIDAY
CLOSE TO YOU
UNDERCLASS MAN

SM CITY BICUTAN
16 BLOCKS
UNDERCLASS MAN
YOURS, MINE & OURS
FEARLESS

SM CITY SAN LAZARO
1 THE DARK
2 LAST HOLIDAY
3 CASANOVA
4 FEARLESS
5 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
6 YOURS, MINE & OURS

SM CITY MANILA
CASANOVA
FINAL DESTINATION 3
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
THE DARK
YOURS, MINE & OURS
FEARLESS
UNDERCLASS MAN
LAST HOLIDAY
CLOSE TO YOU
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
16 BLOCKS
TIGER BLADE

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
CASANOVA
YOURS, MINE & OURS
16 BLOCKS
FEARLESS
CLOSE TO YOU
UNDERCLASS MAN
LAST HOLIDAY
FINAL DESTINATION 3
THE DARK
RESERVED

SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA
FINAL DESTINATION 3
FEARLESS
UNDERCLASS MAN
YOURS, MINE & OURS

SM CITY SUCAT
1 YOURS, MINE & OURS
2 FEARLESS
3 16 BLOCKS
4 UNDERCLASS MAN

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SM CITY BAGUIO
1 FIREWALL
2 AEON FLUX
3 FEARLESS
4 YOURS, MINE & OURS

SM CITY MARILAO
1 SYRIANA
2 GOAL
3 CLOSE TO YOU
4 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 PINK PANTHER
2 CLOSE TO YOU
3 BLOODRAYNE
4 PROOF

SM CITY BACOOR
1 UNDERCLASS MAN
2 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
3 16 BLOCKS
4 FINAL DESTINATION 3
5 FEARLESS
6 CLOSE TO YOU
7 THE DARK
8 YOURS, MINE & OURS

SM CITY STA. ROSA
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
YOURS, MINE & OURS
CLOSE TO YOU
FEARLESS

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 FEARLESS
2 YOURS, MINE & OURS
3 FINAL DESTINATION 3
4 NASAAN SI FRANCIS
5 WALK THE LINE
6 CLOSE TO YOU

SM CITY LUCENA
1 PINK PANTHER
2 CLOSE TO YOU
3 NEW WORLD
4 GOAL

SM CITY MOLINO
1 FEARLESS
2 FINAL DESTINATION 3
3 16 BLOCKS
4 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 MEMOIRS OF GEISHA
11:30FS / 02 00 / 04 30
07 00 09 24 LFS
09 30 LMF / 11.50 END
2 FEARLESS
11 20FS / 11:30 MF
01.30 / 03 30 / 05 30
07 30 / 09 15 LFS /
09 30 LMF / 11 15 END
3 16 BLOCKS
11 20FS / 11:30 MF
01 30 / 03 30 / 05 30
7:30 / 09:15 LFS
09 30 LMF / 11 15 END
4 YOURS, MINE & OURS
5 ST. ANGE
6 NASAAN SI FRANCIS
7 CLOSE TO YOU
8 AEON FLUX

SM CITY ILOILO
AEON FLUX
RESERVED
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
NEW WORLD
CLOSE TO YOU
YOURS, MINE & OURS
RESERVED
NASAAN SI FRANCIS

SM CITY DAVAO
1 FIREWALL
2 AEON FLUX
3 CLOSE TO YOU
4 FEARLESS
5 YOURS, MINE & OURS
6 PROOF

SM CITY CAGAYAN
1 NEW WORLD
2 FEARLESS
3 AEON FLUX
4 FIREWALL

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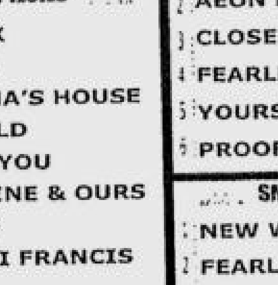

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DATE MOVIE R18	CASANOVA R13	YOURS, MINE AND OURS G
THE LAST HOLIDAY G	UNDERCLASSMAN R13	16 BLOCKS R13

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1 (DOLBY) YOURS, MINE & OURS GP
2 (DOLBY) 16 BLOCKS PG13
3 (DOLBY) DATE MOVIE R18
4 (DOLBY) CASANOVA R13
PREMIERE
(DOLBY) LAST HOLIDAY R13

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (DDS) THE DARK
2 (SDDS) FINAL DESTINATION 3
3 (DTS) THE LAST HOLIDAY
4 GOLD (DTS) 16 BLOCKS
5 GOLD (DOLBY) 16 BLOCKS
6 GOLD (SDDS) YOURS, MINE & OURS
7 GOLD (DOLBY) CASANOVA
8 FEARLESS
9 CLOSE TO YOU
10 UNDERCLASSMAN

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(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) CASSANOVA
2 (DOLBY) YOURS, MINE & OURS
3 (DOLBY) 16 BLOCKS
4 (DOLBY) LAST HOLIDAY

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 16 BLOCKS
2 FEARLESS
3 YOUR, MINE & OURS
4 DATE MOVIE

Blue Wave MARIKINA
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) YOURS, MINE & OURS
2 (DOLBY) DATE MOVIE
3 (DOLBY) 16 BLOCKS
4 (DOLBY) RESERVED

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228
1 (DOLBY) FEARLESS
2 THE DARK
3 YOURS, MINE & OURS
4 16 BLOCKS
5 DATE MOVIE

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium
Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 YOURS, MINE & OURS
2 (DTS) DATE MOVIE
3 (DOLBY) FEARLESS
4 PLEASE CALL

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Binan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 YOURS, MINE & OURS
2 (DOLBY) DATE MOVIE
3 (DTS) FEARLESS
4 PLEASE CALL

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 CLOSE TO YOU
2 PINK PANTHER
3 (DOLBY) AEON FLUX

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 THE NEW WORLD
2 CLOSE TO YOU
3 (DOLBY) MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA
4 (DTS) ST. ANGIE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 FEARLESS
2 AEON FLUX
3 (DOLBY) SAW 2

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)
1 BLOODRAYNE
2 AEON FLUX

starmall EDSA-SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150
3 FEARLESS
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
5 16 BLOCKS

MAKATI CINEMA SQUARE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 FEARLESS
2 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2
3 PLEASE CALL
4 RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA 2000
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1 YOURS, MINE & OURS
2 FEARLESS
3 TIGER BLADE

metropolis star cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 5433994
1 TIGER BLADE
2 16 BLOCKS
3 CASANOVA
4 FEARLESS

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan, Telephone No. (044) 600-3026
1 FIREWALL
2 CLOSE TO YOU
3 AEON FLUX

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-6271
1 YOURS, MINE & OURS
2 PINK PANTHER
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 FEARLESS
2 YOURS, MINE & OURS

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
2 CLOSE TO YOU
3 (DTS ES) YOURS, MINE & OURS
4 BLOODRAYNE

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 (DOLBY) RESERVED
4 (DTS) RESERVED

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 THE NEW WORLD
2 MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA
3 (DOLBY) PINK PANTHER
4 (DTS) AEON FLUX

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 FEARLESS
2 PINK PANTHER

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 CLOSE TO YOU
2 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) TIGER BLADE
2 PLEASE CALL
3 PLEASE CALL
4 (DTS) PLEASE CALL

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) YOURS, MINE & OURS
2 FEARLESS
3 (DTS) BLOODRAYNE
4 NASAAN SI FRANCIS
5 MAGENTA

Fiesta World Mall
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1 THE NEW WORLD
2 CLOSE TO YOU
3 THE PINK PANTHER
4 FEARLESS

Berma Cinema
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1 TIGERBLADE
2 HAYOP SA GANDA

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

Mon David's send-off show tonight

SINGER/SONGWRITER MON DAVID stars in "Extensions" at the Teatrino in Promenade, Greenhills, tonight at 9. The show is being held to support Mon's participation in the 1st London International Jazz Competition on March 18 to 22.

Special guests are Bituin Escalante and Tots Tolentino. Seasoned musicians Mark Lopez, Koko Bermejo, Mike Guevarra and Colby de la Calzada share the spotlight.

Call 9319698 or 7216726.

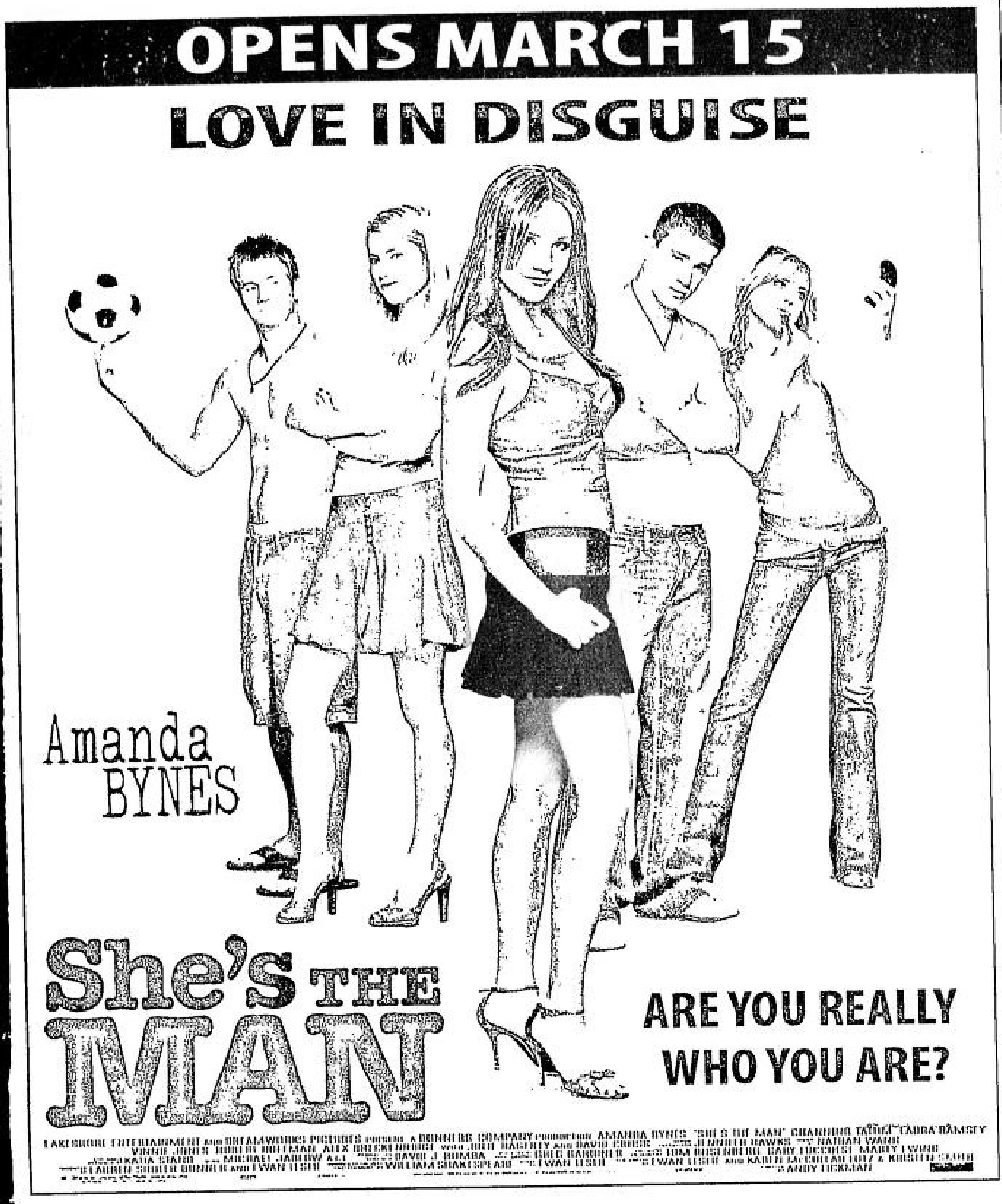
SHOW TIME

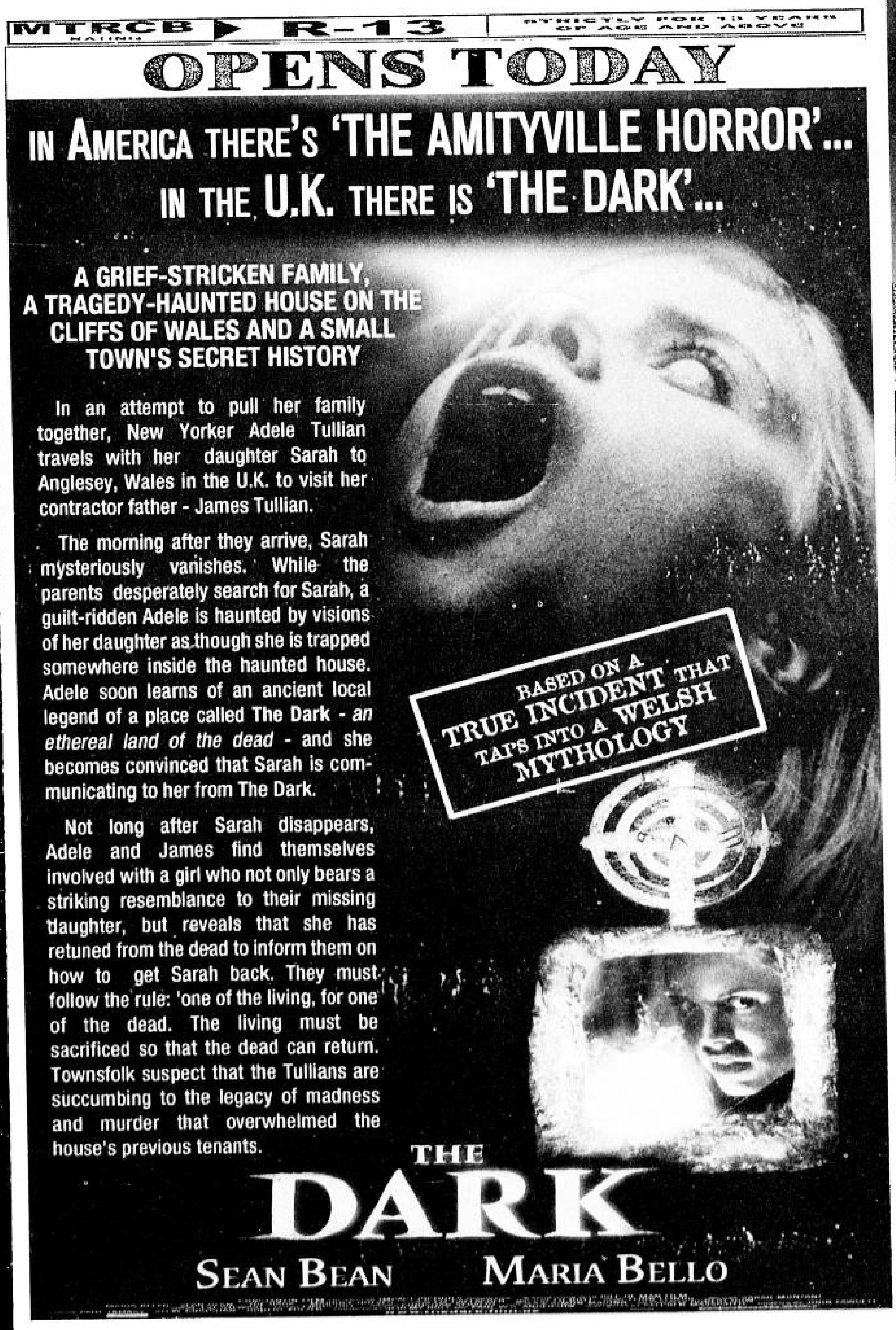
Tonight

Ntwine at Tavern on the Square
RJ at Discovery Suites
Moonstruckat RJ Guitar Bar
Jacqui Magno at Merk's
Mocha at Bagaberde Roxas Boulevard
Wiseguys at Bagaberde Pasig

Tomorrow

Mocha at Tavern on the Square
Bamboo at Virgin Café
Momentsat RJ Guitar Bar
Acoustic Jive at Merk's
Aliya Pares at Bagaberde Pasig
U-Turn and Paolo Santos at Bagaberde Roxas Boulevard


OPENS MARCH 15
LOVE IN DISGUISE
Amanda BYNES
She's THE MAN
ARE YOU REALLY WHO YOU ARE?


MTRCB RATING ▶ R-13
STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE
OPENS TODAY
IN AMERICA THERE'S 'THE AMITYVILLE HORROR'... IN THE U.K. THERE IS 'THE DARK'...
BASED ON A TRUE INCIDENT THAT TAPS INTO A WELSH MYTHOLOGY
THE DARK
SEAN BEAN
MARIA BELLO

A GRIEF-STRICKEN FAMILY, A TRAGEDY-HAUNTED HOUSE ON THE CLIFFS OF WALES AND A SMALL TOWN'S SECRET HISTORY

In an attempt to pull her family together, New Yorker Adele Tullian travels with her daughter Sarah to Anglesey, Wales in the U.K. to visit her contractor father - James Tullian.

The morning after they arrive, Sarah mysteriously vanishes. While the parents desperately search for Sarah, a guilt-ridden Adele is haunted by visions of her daughter as though she is trapped somewhere inside the haunted house. Adele soon learns of an ancient local legend of a place called The Dark - *an ethereal land of the dead* - and she becomes convinced that Sarah is communicating to her from The Dark.

Not long after Sarah disappears, Adele and James find themselves involved with a girl who not only bears a striking resemblance to their missing daughter, but reveals that she has retuned from the dead to inform them on how to get Sarah back. They must follow the rule: 'one of the living, for one of the dead. The living must be sacrificed so that the dead can return. Townsfolk suspect that the Tullians are succumbing to the legacy of madness and murder that overwhelmed the house's previous tenants.

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

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GALLERIA 632-9116

1 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN • THX
2 16 BLOCKS
3 THE LAST HOLIDAY
4 DATE MOVIE
5 CASANOVA
6 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
7 FEARLESS
8 THE DARK
9 KEYS TO THE HOUSE
10 UNDERCLASS MAN

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 16 BLOCKS
2 UNDERCLASS MAN
3 THE LAST HOLIDAY
4 DATE MOVIE
5 THE DARK
6 CASANOVA
7 YOURS, MINE AND OURS

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 DATE MOVIE
2 UNDERCLASS MAN
3 THE LAST HOLIDAY
4 CASANOVA
5 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
6 16 BLOCKS
7 THE DARK
8 FEARLESS

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 DATE MOVIE
2 FEARLESS
3 CASANOVA
4 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
5 16 BLOCKS
6 UNDERCLASS MAN

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2578

1 DATE MOVIE
2 BLOODRAYNE
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 DATE MOVIE
2 CASANOVA
3 16 BLOCKS
4 YOURS, MINE AND OURS

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STA. ROSA (049) 837-0807

1 DATE MOVIE
2 FEARLESS
3 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
4 MURDER
5 FINAL DESTINATION 3

LIPA (043) 757-3684 (043) 312-5870

1 NEW WORLD
2 FEARLESS
3 PINK PANTHER
4 NASAAN SI FRANCIS?

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332

1 16 BLOCKS
2 SYRIANA
3 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
4 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
5 NASAAN SI FRANCIS?

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 AEON FLUX
2 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
3 DATE MOVIE
4 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8168

1 DATE MOVIE
2 FEARLESS
3 CASANOVA
4 16 BLOCKS
5 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
6 NASAAN SI FRANCIS?

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

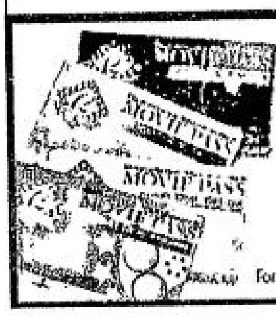
1 DATE MOVIE
2 FEARLESS
3 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
4 FINAL DESTINATION 3
5 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
6 CLOSE TO YOU

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459

1 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2
2 FEARLESS
3 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
4 AEON FLUX
5 NEW WORLD
6 NASAAN SI FRANCIS?

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2
2 FEARLESS
3 YOURS, MINE AND OURS
4 MURDER
5 NEW WORLD
6 NASAAN SI FRANCIS?



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OPENS TODAY

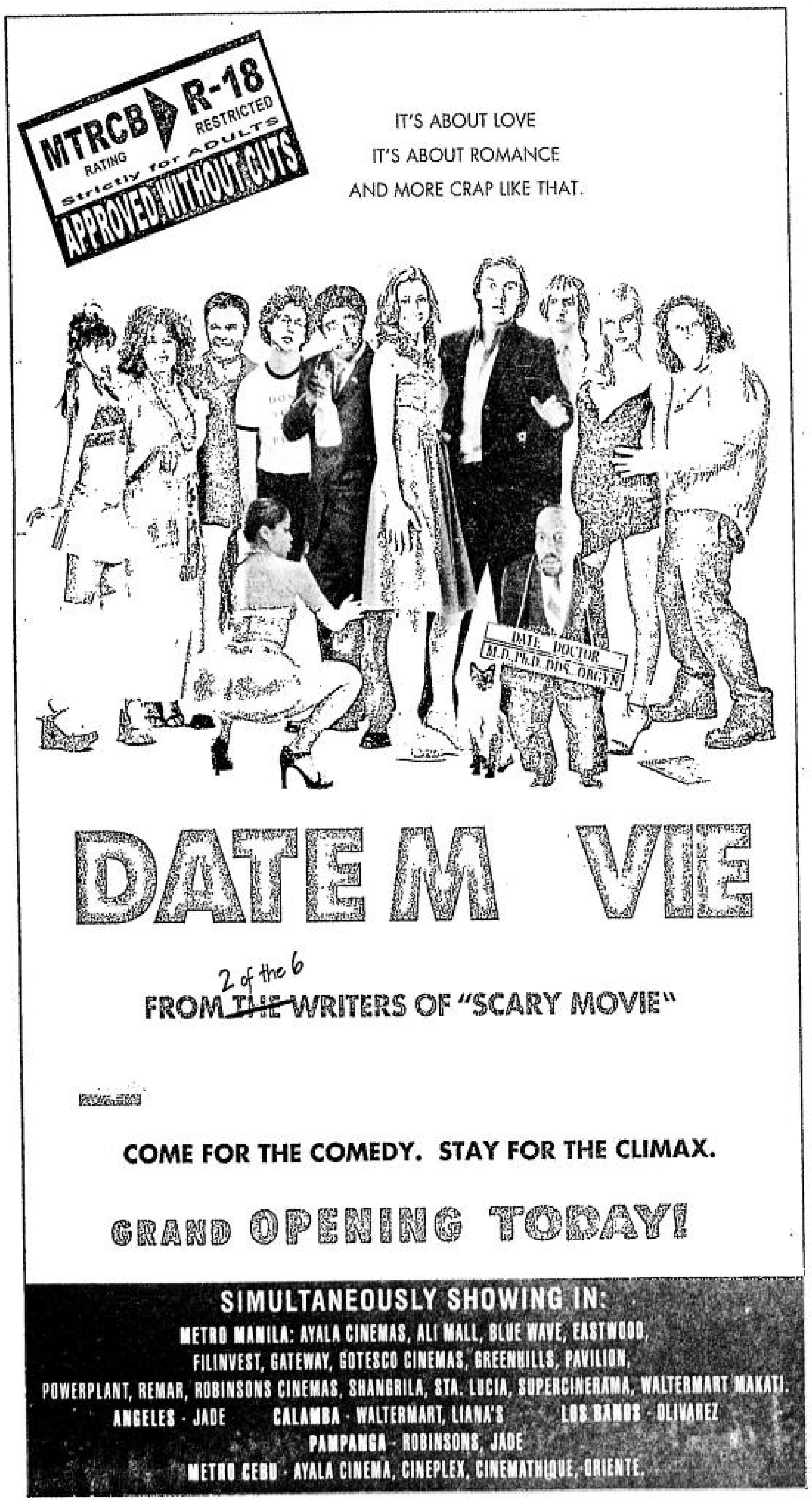
SHE HAS THREE WEEKS TO LIVE...

THE REST OF HER LIFE

QUEEN LATIFAH

LAST HOLIDAY

LastHolidayMovie.com



MTRCB RATING ▶ R-18 RESTRICTED Strictly for ADULTS APPROVED WITHOUT CUTS

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IT'S ABOUT ROMANCE

AND MORE CRAP LIKE THAT.

DATE MOVIE

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ANGELES - JADE CALAMBA - WALTERMART, LIANA'S LOS BANOS - OLIVAREZ

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GUARANTEED SEATS

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1	CASSANOVA	1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00	R-13
2	YOURS, MINE AND OURS	11:40, 1:55, 4:10, 6:25, 8:40, 11:00	GP
3	16 BLOCKS	1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00	PG-13
4	LAST HOLIDAY	11:55, 2:35, 5:15, 7:55, 10:35	GP

Lord of the Rings' Sean Bean and Maria Bello star in "THE DARK", a gripping true ghost story about a series of mysterious circumstances that befall a young family.

IN AMERICA THERE'S 'THE AMITYVILLE HORROR'... IN THE U.K. THERE IS 'THE DARK'...

A HAUNTING GHOST STORY THAT TAPS INTO A WELSH LEGEND

WHAT WILL YOU SEE IN THE DARK?

"Three years ago I was sent a script, loosely based on a haunting true ghost story that happened in Wales," recalls producer Jeremy Bolt (Alien Versus Predator).

"I was rather taken with it because I felt the story has a similarity with what happened at AMITYVILLE. I'm a huge fan of the first Amytiville horror film. A haunted house, unexplained disturbances that includes an interesting look at the supernatural; and religious beliefs of our times," he said.

Like the Amytiville ghost story, **The Dark** also has a family in crisis, a supernatural evil in the place where they live, former tenants who committed mass suicide.

The New family live in a cliff-top farmhouse once owned by a man named Rowan, head of the flock of worshippers who believed in the legend of Annywn (pronounced Anoon). Annwyn was the pagan version of heaven or hell.

The Welsh myth of Annwyn is named after the Celtic legend of a realm where all things are possible and not bound by the constraints of time or space.

In Insular Brythonic mythology, Annwyn was an underworld region, ruled by Arawn.

According to the legend, God gave Arawn control over the demons lest "this world be destroyed." Originally, Annwyn was said to lie so far to the west that not even Manawyddan ap Llyr, the sea and weather god, had found it, for you could only reach Annwyn by dying yourself. Later, however, it was said that Annwyn could be entered by those still living, near Lundy Island and Glastonbury Tor.

I loved the profound texture of the use of Welsh legend to explain what actually happened to the Tullian family. That one particular place could co-exist as two essentially different ones in time, like they were on top of one another but had completely diverse looks and atmospheres. It was a new way at looking at ghosts in my view. In the usual ghost story you see spirits haunting houses that exist in the real world. But is that the way the ghost sees it? Their environment could look so different in the ghost world rather than the way it appears to the living. That reinterpretation really excited me. You pass through a watery portal, like Adelle in The Dark, and while you can recognise your surroundings, it's a warped and scary version of what you are familiar with."

ADVT.

From page A2-1

Underclassman

Stars Nick Cannon, Cheech Marin, Kelly Hu

Directed by Marcos Siega

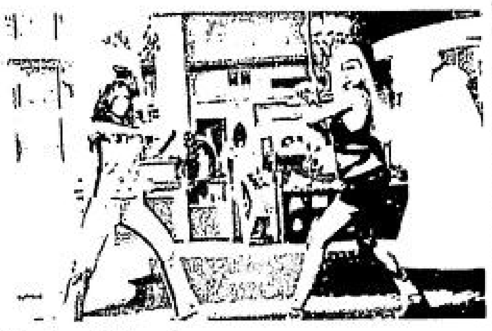
A youthful cop (Cannon) goes undercover in an elite private school to solve a murder. The motormouth detective discovers that high school can be as dangerous as the mean streets of Los Angeles, though. John Anderson of Newsday compares it to "a Jackie Chan movie without Jackie Chan." E! Online dismisses it "as a criminally dumb crime movie."

The Dark

Stars Sean Bean, Maria Bello, Sophie Stuckey

Directed by John Fawcett

Creepiness abounds as a conflicted couple (Bello and Bean), mourning the tragic death of a daughter, is haunted by a girl who claims she had died 60 years earlier. The eerie thing is: The ghostly visitor looks exactly like the departed daughter. An Arrow in the Head review on joblo.com says the thriller's "gore" quotient is "subtle but effective ... with brilliant cinematography, spine-chilling atmosphere." Kenny La Vista of iofilm.co.uk notes, "[It's] not terrible, but it's not brilliant, either."



Date Movie

Stars Alyson Hannigan, Adam Campbell, Fred Willard

Directed by Aaron Seltzer

In this spoof of every romantic comedy whipped up by Hollywood—from "My Best Friend's Wedding" to "Meet the Parents"—a hopeless romantic (Hannigan) finally meets the man of her dreams. To enjoy this potboiler, says Owen Gleiberman of Entertainment Weekly, "You have to be hungry for comedy that's salty and loud, that hits your palate with all the delicacy of hot grease." Michael Rechtshaffen of Hollywood Reporter warns: "So *not* funny, it's scary."

Yours, Mine & Ours

Stars Dennis Quaid, Rene Russo, Linda Hunt, Rip Torn

Directed by Raja Gosnell

This remake of a 1968 rib-tickler starring Henry Fonda and Lucille Ball is about "harried parents surrounded by a maelstrom of cheery, messy kids." Ty Burr of the Boston Globe says it's an "amiable diversion ... the movie equivalent of a box of generic macaroni and cheese—bland, easily digested, comforting, forgettable." Phil Kloer of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution gasps: "How shameless Hollywood is for feeding us thin porridge like this."

The Tiger Blade

Stars Atadawut Luangsuntorn, Phimonrat Phisarayabud

Directed by Teerathorn Siriphunwraporn

An import from Thailand, this supernatural action flick crosses genres and boasts the catchy tagline: "When kick-ass cops can't get the job done, bring in kick-ass magic." To solve a confounding case, a detective with "mystical powers" is unleashed by the force. Twitchfilm.net says: "[It] looks intensely low rent in parts, but [seems] an awful lot of fun."

The Keys to the House

Stars Kim Rossi Stuart, Andrea Rossi, Charlotte Rampling

Directed by Gianni Amelio

This Italian drama is actually a love story between a physically and psychologically handicapped son and the father who abandoned him. They reunite and bond and both experience a kind of healing that allows them to "discover each other and themselves in a place far from home." Lewis Beale of the Film Journal International hails the film for its "sense of honesty... its essential strength... it treats a difficult subject with the delicacy of real art." Manohla Dargis of New York Times agrees: "[It's] a quietly unassuming tearjerker that works its way to your heart despite the occasional cries of protest from your head." V.A. Musetto of New York Post raves: "mature, [it] refuses to descend into Hollywood-style schmaltz." Exclusively at Robinsons Movieworld.

ALL-OUT MARTIAL ARTS ACTION

2ND WEEK

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FROM THE PRODUCER OF "HERO"

STRENGTH HONOR COURAGE

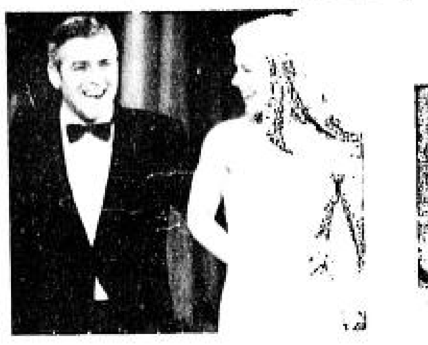
JET LI is FEARLESS

霍元甲

A RONNY YU FILM

Distributed by Buena Vista International thru Columbia Pictures

REESE watches the proceedings on a TV monitor, left. Nicole runs after George Clooney, right. AP



Stars turn into fans backstage

LOS ANGELES—AT THE OSCARS, SUPERstars become fans.

Reese Witherspoon, nominated for Best Actress for her role as country singer June Carter in "Walk the Line," was headed to the green room after making a presentation when she heard fellow Tennessean Dolly Parton begin her performance.

She rushed to a backstage monitor. A stage manager told Witherspoon she could watch from the wings. "Oh, really?" Witherspoon exclaimed, then moved to get a better view.

Backstage at the Oscars is far different from the painstakingly choreographed on-stage scene, with polished performers resembling nervous children before a school play.

Before taking the stage in a neon green outfit, Ben Stiller bounced anxiously. Host Jon Stewart, a New Yorker, exclaimed "Let's go Mets" as he headed toward the stage with a phalanx of writers.

Oscar winner Charlize Theron and Jennifer Lopez silently moved their lips, practicing their lines before going on. When Theron returned backstage after presenting for Best Documentary, she ran into Morgan Freeman and confessed, "I was so nervous out there. Oh my God."

Dazed

After winning the Best Supporting Actress Oscar for "The Constant Gardener," Rachel Weisz looked dazed as she came off the stage, exclaiming to no one in particular, "I'm so tripped out right now. I'm sorry, I'm not normal."

Weisz and other winners take the "winner's walk" after getting their trophies. They exit stage left, then behind the curtains walk the width of the stage, past a table of drinks and into a velvet-lined elevator that takes them down to meet the press.

Nicole Kidman flagged down Best Supporting Actor winner George Clooney as he was making the walk. "You have to take that," she said, pressing the torn winner's envelope that contained his name.

Freeman and trophy presenter Katie Head each simultaneously took off a shoe to relieve aching feet.

"I can't believe we did that at the same time," Head said. *AP*

And the past movie year's worst ...

LOS ANGELES—TOM CRUISE, NICOLE KIDman and Paris Hilton won worst-of prizes Saturday at the Razzies, an Academy Awards spoof mocking the worst of 2005.

But they were upstaged by Jenny McCarthy, who received three Razzies for Worst Picture, Actress and Screenplay as producer, star and writer of the gross-out romantic comedy "Dirty Love."

Cruise had been nominated for Worst Actor for "War of the Worlds," though he lost to Rob Schneider for "Deuce Bigalow: European Gigolo." Cruise did win in a new category for Most Tiresome Tabloid Target, for the public spectacle of his romance with Katie Holmes.

"As guarded, not necessarily secretive, but as private about his personal life as he used to be, for him to suddenly propose in front of reporters on the Eiffel Tower and jump up and down like the monkey in 'Curious George' on Oprah Winfrey's couch, there truly is some problem there," said Razzies founder John Wilson.

Hilton was named Worst Supporting Actress for "House of Wax," a prize "I could have told you she would win as soon as I heard she was going to be in the movie," Wilson said.

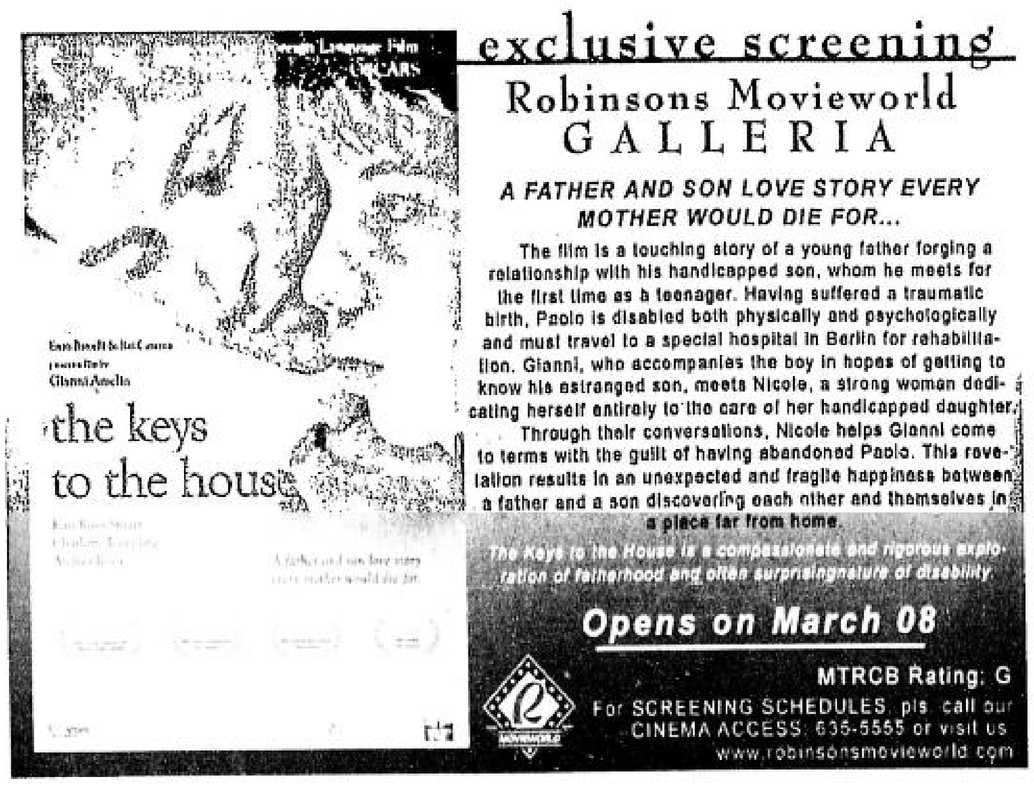
Kidman and Will Ferrell were picked as Worst Screen Couple for "Bewitched," while Hayden Christensen was chosen Worst Supporting Actor for "Star Wars: Episode III—Revenge of the Sith."

"Darth Vader portrayed as a Backstreet Boy gone bad just doesn't cut it as a villain," Wilson said. "Though it was fun to see his arms and legs cut off."

"Son of the Mask," which had led the Razzies field with eight nominations, was named Worst Sequel or Remake.

McCarthy's husband, John Asher, whom she is divorcing, received the Worst Director prize for "Dirty Love."

The other worst-picture nominees were "Son of the Mask," "Deuce Bigalow," "House of Wax" and "The Dukes of Hazzard." *AP*



exclusive screening
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GALLERIA
A FATHER AND SON LOVE STORY EVERY MOTHER WOULD DIE FOR...
The film is a touching story of a young father forging a relationship with his handicapped son, whom he meets for the first time as a teenager. Having suffered a traumatic birth, Paolo is disabled both physically and psychologically and must travel to a special hospital in Berlin for rehabilitation. Gianni, who accompanies the boy in hopes of getting to know his estranged son, meets Nicole, a strong woman dedicating herself entirely to the care of her handicapped daughter.
Through their conversations, Nicole helps Gianni come to terms with the guilt of having abandoned Paolo. This revelation results in an unexpected and fragile happiness between a father and a son discovering each other and themselves in a place far from home.
The Keys to the House is a compassionate and rigorous exploration of fatherhood and often surprisingnature of disability.
Opens on March 08
MTRCB Rating: G
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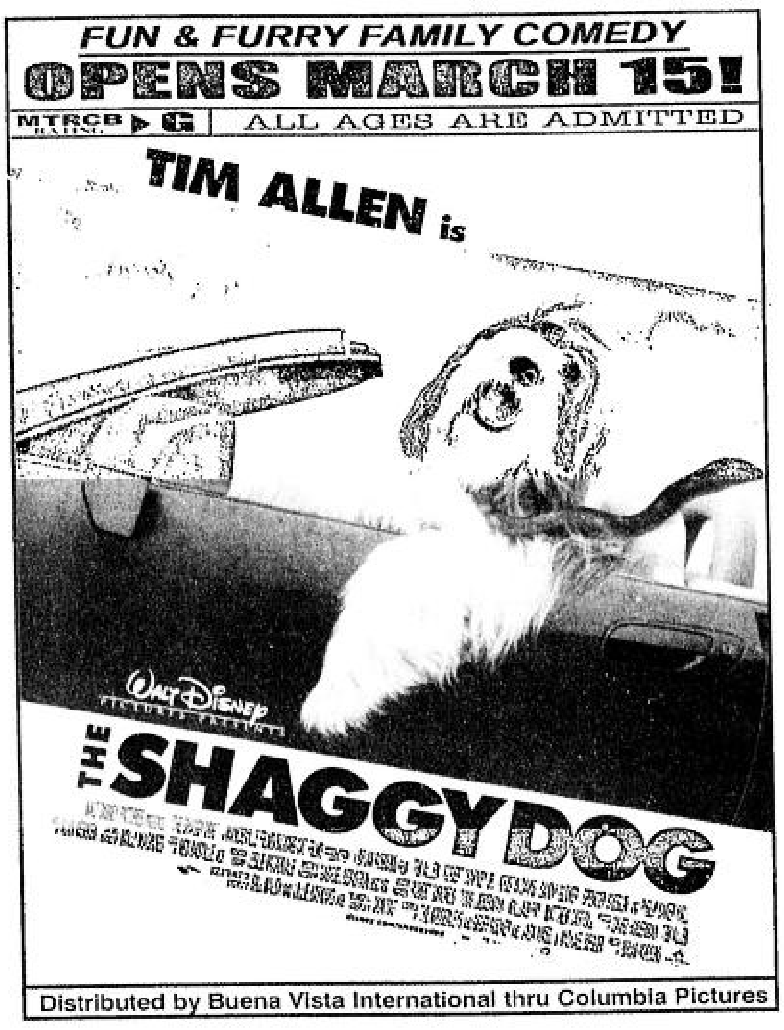
Gianni Amelio
the keys to the house



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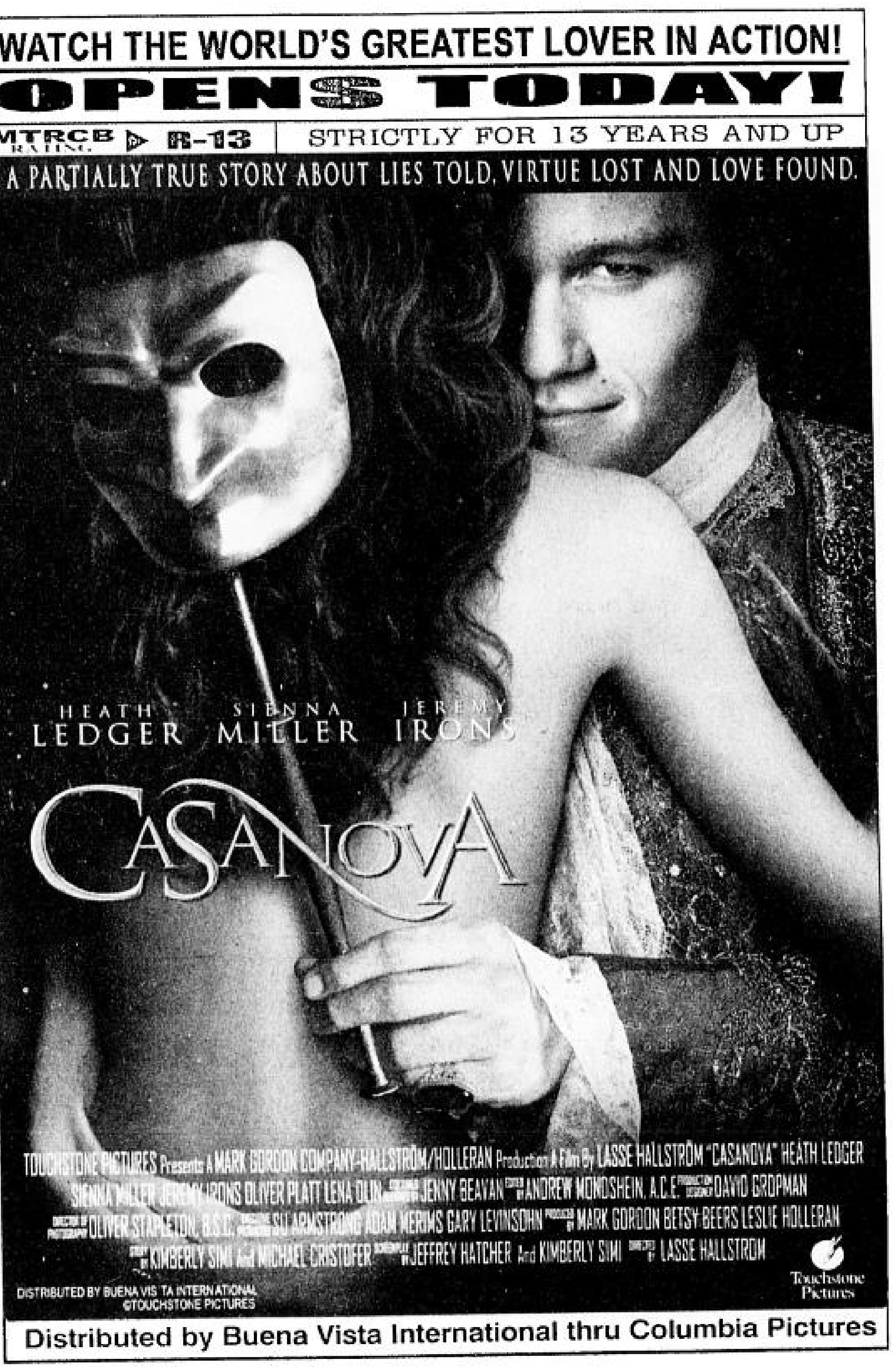

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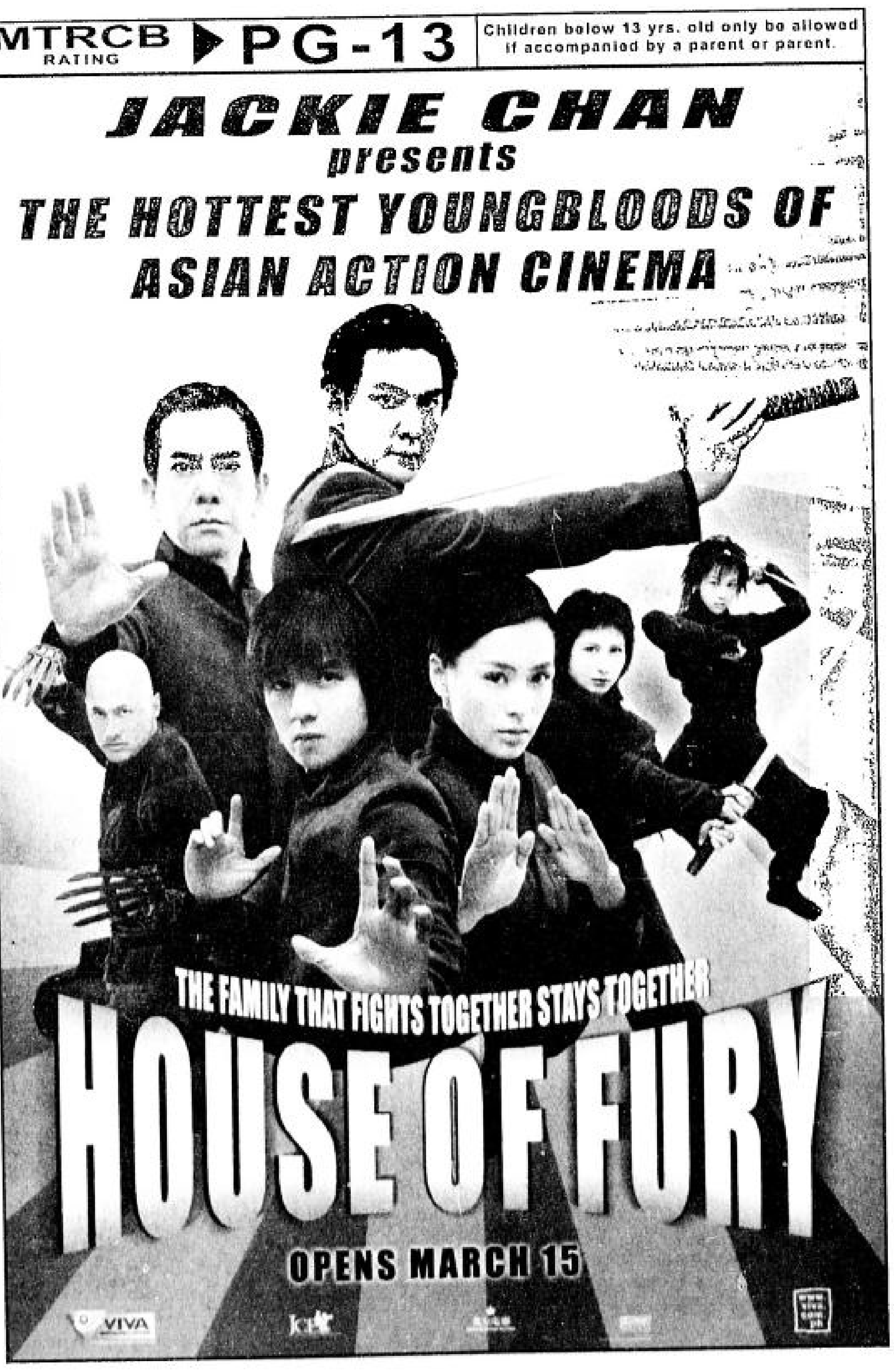

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THE FAMILY THAT FIGHTS TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER
HOUSE OF FURY
OPENS MARCH 15
VIVA

OSCAR BEST PICTURE: Thandie Newton and Matt Dillon in "Crash."

The possibility of enlightenment

REVIEW

WITH "CRASH," PAUL HAGGIS delivers a knockout punch that rivals the one he leveled with his Oscar-nominated "Million Dollar Baby" script.

As both director and co-writer, Haggis weaves a tale of disparate Los Angeles residents whose paths cross over a 36-hour period. The encounters expose their prejudices and frailties, but Haggis judges none of them; rather, everyone is to blame equally, simply for being human and imperfect.

"In LA, nobody touches you," Detective Graham (Don Cheadle) says quietly on his way to investigate a car accident. "We crash into each other just to feel something."

Exploring ethnicity could have been preachy or heavy-handed. But Haggis and co-writer Bobby Moresco have created such complex characters that they avoid such over-simplification.

Misconceptions

Strong performances abound from an excellent, eclectic cast, including Sandra Bullock, Matt Dillon, Michael Pena and rapper Chris "Ludacris" Bridges. The candid manner in which characters discuss race is searing but necessary to hear.

The district attorney (Brendan Fraser) and his wife (Bullock) have their car carjacked at gunpoint by two young black men (Bridges and Larenz Tate), who just got done discussing how tired they are of being seen as threatening based on their color.

Bullock's character, Jean, then goes on a tirade at her Brentwood home about how she doesn't trust the man changing the locks on her doors because he looks like a gang member.

But the misconceptions aren't limited to blacks, whites and Hispanics. We see Daniel the locksmith coming home to his wife and young daughter, whom he'll later have to protect from an angry Persian convenience store owner he'd argued with earlier.

Dillon is so believable as a veteran cop who takes perverse pleasure in pulling over a wealthy black couple (Terrence Howard and Thandie Newton), he's hard to watch.

Haggis moves seamlessly between all these stories and his characters reach a crisis point simultaneously, followed by melancholy clarity. But none of them achieve anything resembling an easy sense of peace.

Neither do we. But at least, the movie indicates, there's the possibility of enlightenment. *AP*

BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE PICTURE: "Tsotsi," a glimpse of post-apartheid Africa.

'Tsotsi' a poetic spiritual journey

REVIEW

NEW YORK—FAR FROM THE ghetto streets of Soweto, the South African drama "Tsotsi" resonates with a raw freshness and immediacy and an almost mythic sense of reclamation and redemption.

Named Best Foreign Language Film on Monday's Academy Awards, "Tsotsi" brings Athol Fugard's novel about the mean streets of 1950s South Africa into modern times, to offer an insightful glimpse of post-Apartheid life, from its most violently severe to its most culturally vibrant.

Director Gavin Hood, who also wrote the screenplay, packs a poetic spiritual journey into an intense hour and a half, tracing a teen's transformation from almost mindless thug to incipient manchild experiencing his first stirrings of compassion.

"Tsotsi" presents a sterling film debut by Presley Chweneyagae in the title role as a young gang leader whose anger and animal ferocity seemingly doom him to early death.

In "Tsotsi-Taal," the street language of Soweto used in the film, "Tsotsi" is a generic term for thug or gangster. Chweneyagae's Tsotsi embodies that identity—a 19-year-old orphan who raised himself and learned in the process that evoking fear in others was his surest means to survive and thrive.

Tsotsi leads a strange gang of bad boys. At a bar one drunken night, one of them pushes Tsotsi to share some personal shred of his dark past. Tsotsi seems to have repressed all childhood memories, and this sparks buried feelings of anxiety and dread.

Healing

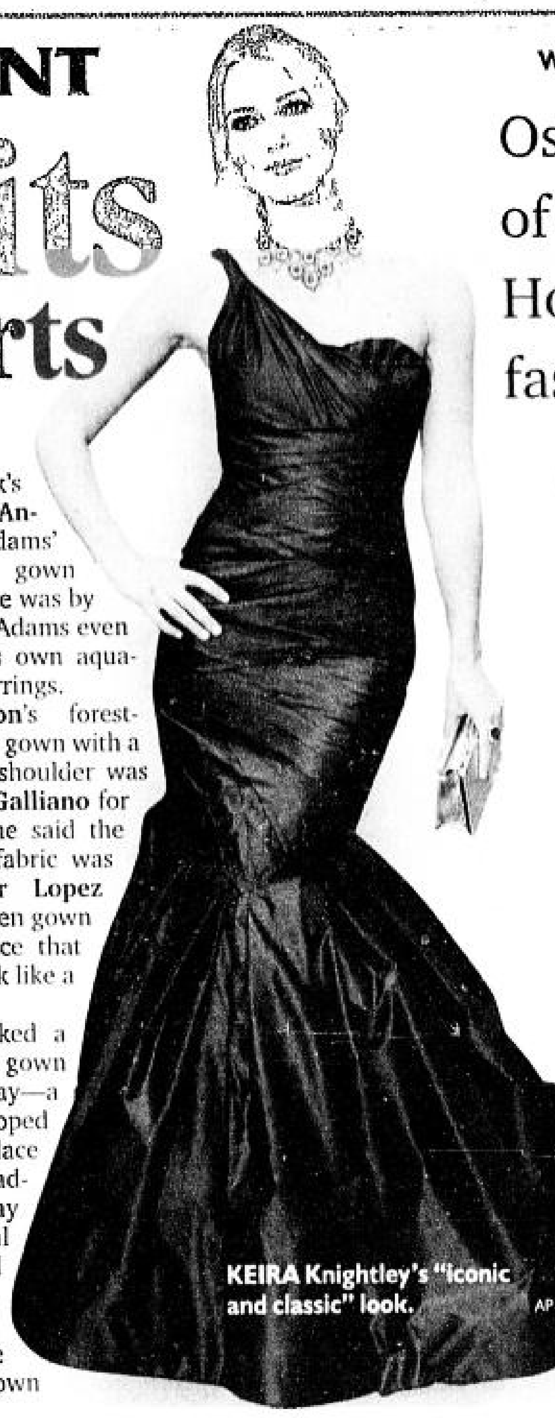
Tsotsi reacts the only way he knows how, with rage. He viciously beats the offender, then sensing the repugnance of the other bar patrons and even members of his own gang, he flees.

He finds himself on the lam from police after a carjacking goes awry, leaving him in possession of a three-month-old baby.

All of this action is packed into the movie's opening. The rest of the film reveals the humanity Tsotsi has kept hidden, even from himself.

Drawing stellar performances from the entire cast, Hood has crafted a film rooted in South Africa's here and now, yet timeless in its examination of the healing power of human connection. *AP*

From form fits to full skirts



KEIRA Knightley's "iconic and classic" look. AP

NEW YORK—THERE IS A new young fashion star in Hollywood. **Keira Knightley** wore a striking wine-colored, one-shoulder gown by **Vera Wang** to the Oscars Sunday night (at the Kodak Theater in Los Angeles) that hit the right balance between youthful funkiness and movie-star glamour.

Knightley wore her strawberry blond hair in a loose ponytail, and she complemented the dress with a one-of-a-kind necklace with emeralds, rubies and diamonds from the Bulgari archives and gold sandals with multiple ankle straps by **Jimmy Choo**.

Her makeup artist, **Kate Lee**, said she wanted to create an "iconic and classic" look for the 20-year-old.

Screen siren

Michelle Williams went the screen siren route in a marigold yellow chiffon gown with tulle pleats surrounding the V neck, which allowed her to show off a 19th-century diamond fringe necklace from **Fred Leighton**. Her hair was swept up in a 1930s style, and on her arm was **Heath Ledger** in a classic bow-tie tuxedo, down to the white pocket-square.

Reese Witherspoon and **Ryan Phillipe** looked like a superstar couple—she wore a pale beribboned and beaded '50s **Dior** gown and he was dressed in a three-piece suit with a black tie.

Felicity Huffman wore a supersexy black gown by **Zac Posen** with a plunging V neck, keyhole back, sheer panels on the side and pleated bodice and hem.

For **Rachel Weisz**, who is seven months pregnant, comfort was important in picking her long, slinky black gown with cap sleeves—which also showed off significant cleavage. "My friend **Narciso Rodriguez** made me three dresses and I chose one this morning," she said. Her Chopard emerald-cut diamond demi-drop earrings had round white diamond studs.

"Insane" satin

Jessica Alba, who was caught by the cameras touching up her **Dior** lip gloss, chose a tight gold **Versace** halter gown with floral beading that she said "fit like a glove," and **Jane Seymour** was in a champagne satin halter gown with jeweled accents on the bodice by **Pamella Roland**.

Sandra Bullock and **Amy Adams** both picked gowns with pockets. Bullock's navy gown was by **Angel Sanchez** and Adams' chocolate brown gown with ribbon applique was by **Carolina Herrera**. Adams even borrowed Herrera's own aquamarine dangling earrings.

Charlize Theron's forest-green, handpainted gown with a giant bow on the shoulder was designed by **John Galliano** for **Christian Dior**. She said the leather silk satin fabric was "insane." **Jennifer Lopez** was in a lighter green gown with a fitted bodice that laced up in the back like a corset.

Ziyi Zhang picked a **Giorgio Armani** gown fresh off the runway—a black scalloped seashell-shaped lace bustier with jet beading worn with a gray Swarovski crystal encrusted full crinoline skirt. **Hilary Swank** was in a sweetheart-style black strapless gown by **Versace**.

Jennifer Aniston was in a black tank gown by **Rochas** with a long train and a vintage platinum-and-diamond Bulgari necklace from the 1930s. Makeup artist **Angela Levin**, calling Aniston "a sun-kissed angel," emphasized her eyelashes with a not-yet-available Chanel mascara.

Nicole Kidman was in a cream-colored strapless gown with beautiful delicate embroidery, and **Naomi Watts** wore a nude-colored, one-shoulder gown with frayed fabric on the top by **Givenchy**. As the model in jeweler **David Yurman**'s new ads, Watts' rose quartz-and-diamond earrings and a rose quartz ring were made especially for her.

Oscars sightings of old and new Hollywood fashion stars

Jennifer Garner wore a halter-style, hand-embroidered **Michael Kors** gown in nude-colored tulle featuring Swarovski crystals and sterling silver flowers.

Jada Pinkett Smith was in a bright blue strapless column gown by **Roberto Cavalli**. "I just wanted to be a little vibrant and a little sexy on the carpet," she said. Husband **Will Smith** chimed in, "That's my wife in the dress. It becomes difficult to notice the dress itself."

Salma Hayek had on a slate blue gown, and her hair was long and loose.

One of the biggest misses of the night was **Helena Bonham Carter**. Her off-the-shoulder, tea-length blue satin gown was fine but her bed-head hair and clunky white shoes were not.

Oscar.com fashion analyst Tom Julian was a fan of **Meryl Streep**'s plum V-neck gown with long sleeves that she wore with dangling earrings. Julian also noted that the shape of the Oscar gowns shifted to full skirts from the more formfitting styles at the award shows earlier in the season.

As for the men, **George Clooney** was trying to be sarcastic when he told E!'s Isaac Mizrahi "I'm very stylish," but he indeed was in his **Armani** two-button peak lapel tuxedo. *AP*

ROWS of silver for Reese Witherspoon. AP

JESSICA Alba's gold Versace that "fit like a glove." AP

ZIYI Zhang in Armani fresh off the runway. AP

Overheard at the Academy Awards

LOS ANGELES—HERE ARE SOME OF THE memorable quotes from the Academy Awards show on Sunday (Monday in Manila), onstage and off.

- "There are women here who could barely afford enough gown to cover their breasts."—Host Jon Stewart, joking that pirates were robbing Hollywood and its denizens.
- "'Capote' showed America that not all gay people are virile cowboys; some are actually effete New York intellectuals."—Stewart, New Yorker.
- "It just happens this way."—Ang Lee, who won Best Director but lost to "Crash" for Best Picture, when asked if "Brokeback Mountain" suffered because of its gay subject matter.
- "Yes, I do—hometown movie." Larry McMurtry, screenwriter winner for "Brokeback," when asked if he believed "Crash" won because it was based in LA.
- "Oscar isn't one of them."—Rachel Weisz, Best Supporting Actress for 'The Constant Gardener,' when asked what she would consider naming her soon-to-be-born baby.
- "I changed a lot of diapers ... got my hair done, got my nails down, got my makeup done and I was out the door."—Best Actress Reese Witherspoon, on her preparations before coming to the ceremony.
- "Thank you all ... for embracing our film about love and about tolerance and about truth."—Cathy Schulman, producer of "Crash."
- "I'm in a category with some great, great, great actors, fantastic actors, and I'm really overwhelmed."—Philip Seymour Hoffman, Best Actor for "Capote."
- "I look at it as a nod to all of my films because to me I just made one long film." —Honorary Oscar winner Robert Altman, director of 37 films including "M-A-S-H," "Nashville" and "Gosford Park."
- "All right, so I'm not winning [for] Director." George Clooney after winning his first Oscar, Best Supporting Actor in "Syriana" (he was also nominated in the Best Director race for "Good Night and Good Luck").
- "I do my own stunts." — Jennifer Garner, presenter, after nearly tripping on her way to the microphone.
- "I want to thank the academy for sitting me next to George Clooney at the nominees luncheon." — Corinne Marrinan, co-winner of the short subject documentary Oscar for "A Note of Triumph: The Golden Age of Norman Corwin."

Reuters, AP

NAH, John Stewart is "really funny," and was among the night's biggest winners.

Bland Oscars, blah host?

NEW YORK—YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE amused if you had revved up your TiVo and played back an evening's worth of "Daily Show with Jon Stewart" reruns while you tracked Oscar winners on the Web.

Stewart, usually a very funny guy, displayed a lack of beginner's luck as first-time host of "The 78th Annual Academy Awards," which ABC aired live.

His usually impeccable blend of puckishness and self-effacement fell flat in the service of Oscar. He was not alone; the rest of the broadcast was largely bland.

Thank goodness for the occasional attempt at cleverness, as when Tom Hanks demonstrated the Academy's new strategy for speeding up acceptance speeches. Onstage musicians surrounded him, then physically assaulted him to shut it.

This was not too far from the truth. From the instant each Oscar recipient began speaking, the orchestra's mewling Lite-FM assault began. It was distracting and obnoxious.

The broadcast began with a filmed intro that found past Oscar host Billy Crystal being introduced as this year's host, then declining, followed by Chris Rock, Steve Martin, Whoopi Goldberg, David Letterman, Mel Gibson, even Mr. Moviephone — none of whom wanted the gig.

That seemed to leave it to Stewart by default. Sure, he's an outsider — a New York-based TV personality, the sort who reminded the audience that "tonight is the night we celebrate excellence in film —with *me*, the fourth male lead from 'Death to Smoochy.'"

As the night wore on, Stewart proved too deferential and too obvious in his targets.

His biggest laugh? In reference to the swan dress that singer Bjork wore to the 2001 awards, Stewart said she could not make it because she "was trying on her Oscar dress and Dick Cheney shot her."

But more typical were Stewart's misfires, one of which he tried to recover from in a desperate way unworthy of him: "I am a loser."

Not true. He's really funny. The many millions of Oscars viewers unfamiliar with Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" should tune in and see. That should make Stewart the biggest winner from Oscar night. *AP*

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2006

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BUSINESS

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Going, going, … /B3

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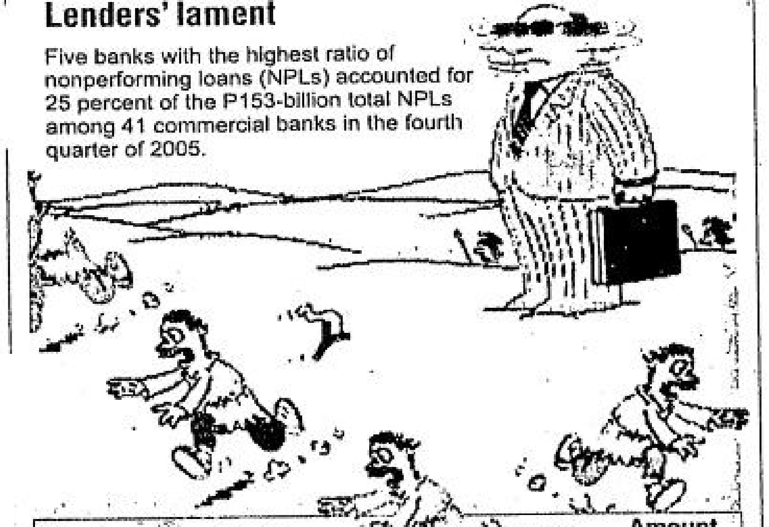
February inflation highest in 8 months

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Lenders' lament

Five banks with the highest ratio of nonperforming loans (NPLs) accounted for 25 percent of the P153-billion total NPLs among 41 commercial banks in the fourth quarter of 2005.



Rank	Bank	Ratio	Amount (in million pesos)
1	Al-Amanah Islamic Bank	97%	7
2	United Overseas Bank	38%	815
3	Philippine National Bank	28%	27,838
4	Philippine Bank of Communications	21%	3,327
5	United Coconut Planters Bank	19%	6,412

Sources: Commercial banks' published statements of condition (SOCs)
Jamie Alarcon, PDI Research

Higher VAT rate raises prices of goods, services

By Michelle V. Remo

PRICES OF BASIC GOODS AND SERVICES ROSE BY AN AVERAGE of 7.6 percent in February, the highest in eight months, following the implementation of a higher value-added tax, the National Statistics Office reported yesterday.

This compares with the 6.7-percent inflation rate in January.

The NSO said nearly all commodity groups posted higher inflation rates in February.

The VAT increase to 12 percent took effect on Feb. 1. It was mandated by the VAT Reform Law, which seeks to help the government reduce its budget deficit by expanding the coverage of the tax to include oil and electricity starting November last year and raising the tax rate effective last month.

The NSO said prices of food, beverage and tobacco increased by an average of 6.4 percent in February, much faster than the previous month's 5.6 percent.

The cost of fuel, light and water rose by an average of 17.1 percent last month, also faster than the 13.5 percent in January.

The February inflation rate settled at the low end of the 7.6- to 7.9-percent inflation forecast made by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

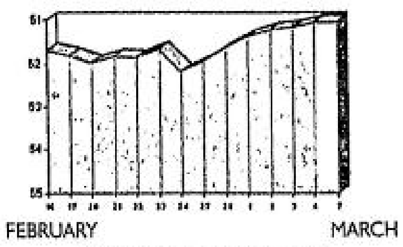
Dennis Arroyo, director for policy and planning of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), said that while the February inflation rate inched up above the 7-percent mark, it still reflected a moderate impact of the VAT rate increase.

The Neda's original projection was for inflation for 2006 to be between 8 and 8.5 percent because of the higher VAT rate.

FEBRUARY/ B3

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 51.06 = $

As of 5 p.m., March 7, 2006

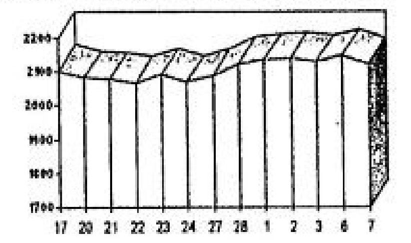
¥ 117.78 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 7, 2006

GOLD: $555.50-556.00

per ounce Hong Kong, March 7, 2006

STOCK MARKET



Stocks fall on profit taking

STOCKS FELL YESTERDAY AS traders sold stocks that had rallied recently.

STOCKS/ B2

Forex reserves hit all-time high of $20.58B

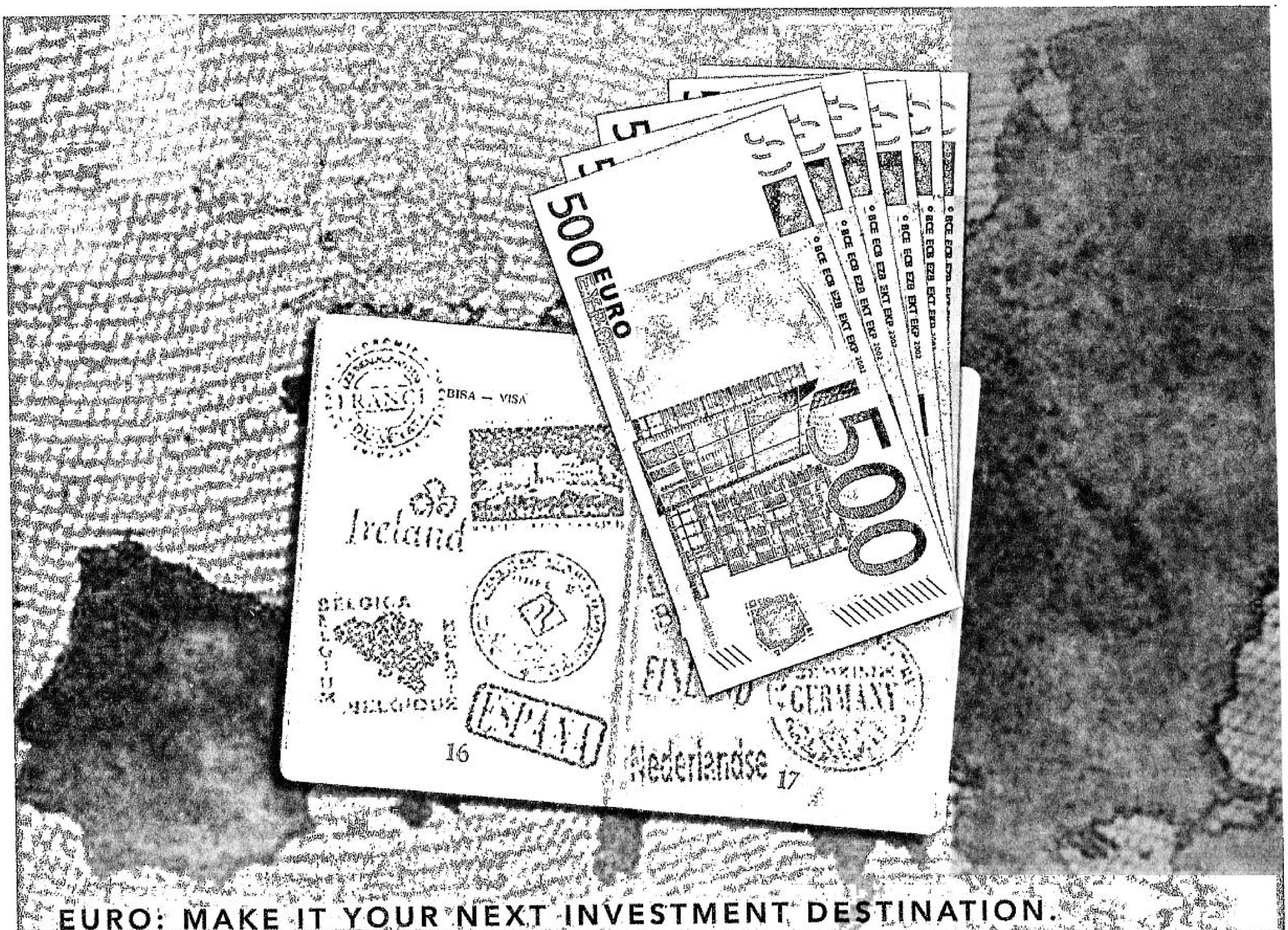
By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES' FOREIGN EXchange reserves hit a record high of $20.58 billion in end-February from $20.48 billion a month ago on strong inflows from foreign borrowings and offshore investments, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said yesterday.

"The higher gross international reserves (GIR) level was attributed mainly to the deposit by the national government of the proceeds from its bond sale, as well as the Bangko Sentral's foreign exchange operations and income from investments abroad," BSP Officer-in-Charge Diwa Guinigundo said in a statement.

The national government recently raised $2.1 billion from a combination of dollar- and euro-denominated bond offerings in January. That same month, the country's GIR breached the $20-bil-

FOREX/ B2



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Megaworld to increase int'l offer

Estrada a new AIM head

ASIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEment alumnus and trustee Francis Estrada has been selected as the new president of AIM.

He will succeed current president Roberto de Ocampo, who will be retiring on May 15.

With AB/BSBA undergraduate degrees from De La Salle University, Estrada graduated "With Distinction" from AIM in 1973 with a Master in Business Management.

He completed the Advanced Management Program at the Harvard Business School in 1989.

Estrada has been an international investment baker and financial entrepreneur over the last 32 years, 22 of which were spent outside the Philippines. He co-founded and served as President and CEO of international investment firm, William E. Simon and Sons (Asia); served as COO of the international merchant bank, Asian Oceanic Group; and led the turn-around and served as Managing Director of First Indonesian Finance and Investment Corporation, the merchant banking subsidiary of the Indonesian central bank.

ESTRADA

He also advised major international companies as a private financial adviser and has served on the boards of more than 30 companies.

AIM is the first graduate school of business and management in Asia, and has been molding Asia's business, development, and entrepreneurial leaders and managers since 1968.

Issue to bring in ₱5.8 billion in proceeds to property firm

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PROPERTY DEVELOPER MEGAworld Corp. has increased the size of its international public float to 4.1 billion shares from 3.5 billion.

At Megaworld's closing price of P1.42 yesterday, the 4.1 billion shares will bring in some P5.8 billion in proceeds to the property developer.

The issuance of an additional 633.4 million common shares was approved yesterday by the Megaworld board to cover the possible increase in the demand for Megaworld shares by foreign buyers.

Megaworld, however, has not yet set a date for the offering nor has it finalized the size of the offer.

"The purpose of the international offering is to expand the company's shareholder base to institutional investors," Megaworld said in a statement.

Megaworld's proposed offer trails that of Gokongwei-led Universal Robina Corp., which raised some P12 billion from a recent offer of additional shares to foreign investors.

Megaworld added that the proceeds of the offer would be used to finance existing and new real estate projects.

Megaworld said earlier it would require P7 billion for the completion of the first phase of its 25-hectare hotel and residential project dubbed Newport City at the Villamor air base.

Megaworld and Araneta Center Inc. have also joined hands for a P15-billion residential project to be linked to the MRT-3 and LRT-2 mass transit systems in Cubao in Quezon City.

Megaworld reported a 43-percent increase in its income last year to P1.15 billion from P808 million in 2004.

This came on the back of a 19.3-percent increase in revenues last year to P5.32 billion.

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Forex reserves hit all-time ...

From page B1

lion mark for the first time.

"These inflows were, however, partly offset by payments of maturing foreign exchange obligations of the government and the BSP," Guinigundo said.

The GIR—consisting of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, special drawing rights from multilateral institutions and foreign investments—is an indicator of the country's ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy.

The BSP also dips into its foreign reserves to supply dollars to the spot foreign exchange market to quell speculative attacks against the local currency.

A large GIR build-up thus provides psychological support for the peso by improving the BSP's war chest at the foreign exchange market. The current GIR level is adequate to cover about 4.4 months' worth of imports of goods and payments of services. It is also equivalent to 3.3 times the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 1.8 times based on residual maturity.

Short-term debt based on residual maturity refers to outstanding external debt with original maturity of one year or less, plus principal payments on medium- and long-term loans of the public and private sectors falling due within the next 12 months.

Despite a rising trade deficit partly due to the skyrocketing oil import bill, the country is benefiting from strong foreign exchange flows particularly from a rebound in portfolio investments and remittances of overseas Filipino workers.

BSP-registered foreign portfolio investments, for instance, posted a net inflow of $515.3 million for the month of February, a reversal of the $117 million in net outflows in January.

Stocks fall on profit taking

From page B1

Selling by state pension funds, which are suspected to have helped support local stocks during the one-week state of emergency, also contributed to the market's fall, some dealers said.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index ended down 26.41 points, or 1.2 percent, at 2,121.91 after rising 0.8 percent Monday. The index was up for most of last week. The All Shares Index lost 12.36 points at 1,304.89.

Blue chip Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., which fell 0.5 percent to hit P1,825. Ayala Corp. lost 2.2 percent to P340, and SM Prime fell 2.5 percent to P7.80.

"The market is due for profit taking," said James Lago, an analyst at Westlink Global Equities. "I think there's room for the market to fall some more."

Although the economic fundamentals support continued gains, some stocks have become too pricey after a recent rise, dealers said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's surprise visit to the bourse Monday inspired investors to continue buying, they said. She lifted the week-old state of emergency Friday, declared to quash attempts to unseat her.

All sectoral indicators closed lower. Losers beat gainers 42 to 32, with 55 issues unchanged. AP

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- [illegible] SATA ports
- [illegible]
- Dual Gigabit [illegible]
- ATI Rage XL [illegible]
- 2 x 1" [illegible]
- Single [illegible]

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- Supports Dual Xeon 800 Mhz/2MB cache
- Intel E7520/X6DHP-8G
- Supports ECC Reg. DDR333 in 6 slots
- 1 PCI-X 133Mhz (Full Length) or 1 PCI-Express x8
- Adaptec 2-channel SCSI
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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 7, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	7,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	35.5	36	35	35.5	231,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	59	59.5	59	59.5	991,000
China Banking Corp.	670	670	670	670	6,950
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	300
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.45	0.46	0.42	0.43	14,010,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	64.5	64.5	62	62.5	286,600
International Exch. Bank	25	25	25	25	36,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	35	36	35	36	1,158,300
Philippine National Bank	31	31.5	31	31.5	11,000
Phil. Savings Bank	35	35	35	35	2,400
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13.25	13.25	13.25	13.25	2,100
Security Bank Corp.	37	37.5	37	37.5	122,600
Union Bank of the Phil.	34.5	34.5	34.5	34.5	3,700
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.78	0.78	0.78	0.78	170,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	24	24.75	23.5	24.75	32,200
Manulife Financial Corp.	3240	3270	3240	3270	1,270
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	40,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2190	2220	2190	2220	890
Ivantage Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	1,620,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	45	45	44.5	45	679,400
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	42.5	42.5	42	42	92,900
Manila Electric Co. A	12.75	12.75	12.75	12.75	7,800
Manila Electric Co. B	19	19.75	19	19.75	1,409,700
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.5	1,463,000
Petron Corp.	4.55	4.6	4.4	4.5	3,476,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.91	30,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	1,000
CADP Group Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	30,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	19.75	19.75	19.5	19.5	81,200
Jollibee Foods Corp.	35.5	35.5	34.5	35	554,000
RFM Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	30,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	75,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	80,000
San Miguel Corp. A	61.5	62	61.5	62	50,100
San Miguel Corp. B	82	82	78.5	79.5	234,200
Universal Robina Corp	17.75	18	17.75	17.75	634,800
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	530,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.3	0.31	0.29	0.29	8,510,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.22	1.26	1,178,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	500,000
CHEMICALS					
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.7	0.77	0.7	0.74	220,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.0725	0.07	0.07	5,400,000
Macondray Plastics Inc.	2.5	2.95	2.5	2.95	20,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	3,500,000
Panasonic Mfg Phil Corp.	6.5	7.5	6.5	7.5	747,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.54	0.68	0.52	0.68	4,550,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	35,000,000
Ayala Corp.	345	345	337.5	340	98,840
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.95	5.1	4.95	5	14,281,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.024	0.023	0.023	7,500,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.46	2.5	2.44	2.5	949,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	5,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	710,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.97	0.97	0.95	0.95	3,900,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.1	3	3	150,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	2.12	2.14	2.04	2.04	1,041,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	5.2	5.2	5	5.2	1,348,000
Medco Holdings	0.21	0.235	0.205	0.235	2,220,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.125	0.15	0.125	0.15	1,140,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.3	0.32	0.3	0.32	720,000
Pacifica	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	6,200,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.25	5,130,000
SM Investments Corp.	224	224	219	224	727,570
South China Resources Inc.	0.74	0.74	0.73	0.73	230,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.12	0.125	0.115	.0.12	510,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	11	11	10.75	10.75	1,796,700
Belle Corp.	0.95	0.96	0.95	0.96	830,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	70,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	410,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.78	1.78	1.74	1.78	162,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	0.8	0.93	0.8	0.93	40,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.23	0.23	0.225	0.225	2,600,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	100,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.45	2,300,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.2	1.22	1.2	1.22	2,501,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.22	0.22	0.205	0.205	2,110,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.47	1,000,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	1,500,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.44	1.44	1.4	1.42	5,074,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.34	2,000,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.38	0.46	0.38	0.45	17,300,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.225	0.225	0.22	0.22	5,440,000
SM Development Corp.	1.48	1.48	1.42	1.42	64,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.9	7.9	7.7	7.8	3,851,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	600,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	40,700
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.89	0.9	0.89	0.9	530,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	865	865	830	840	30,090
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.2	3.25	3.2	3.25	173,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1820	1835	1815	1825	110,050
Information Technology					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.19	0.175	0.19	9,160,000
Imperial Res.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	40,000,000
Ionics Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	70,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	200,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0525	0.0525	0.05	0.0525	300,000
Philweb Corp	0.027	0.027	0.025	0.026	102,800,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.96	1.98	1.96	1.98	51,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	10,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	12.25	12.5	12	12.5	1,892,600
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	50,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.28	1.4	1.28	1.28	116,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	3,008,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp	1.78	1.78	1.76	1.76	928,000
Manila Jockey Club	3.05	3.1	3.05	3.1	30,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	670,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.4	0.41	0.4	0.41	3,390,000
EDUCATION					
IPeople Inc.	3.1	3.15	3.1	3.15	33,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Paxys Inc.	8.3	8.3	8.2	8.3	577,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.98	1.04	0.98	1	1,440,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.16	1.2	1.16	1.18	240,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	8,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.9	7	6.8	7	2,566,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.205	0.21	0.2	0.2	2,280,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. B	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.25	2,170,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	1,200,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.024	0.025	0.024	0.024	26,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.006	0.0055	0.006	46,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.72	1.8	1.72	1.76	7,537,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.86	1.94	1.86	1.92	14,182,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	27.5	27.5	26.5	26.5	65,800
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	350,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.34	570,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	800,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	4,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	210,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	120,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.8	21,000
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	11.75	11.75	11.5	11.5	73,700

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Financial	19,079,510	171,387,223.10
Industrial	78,594,100	227,044,163.00
Holding Firms	86,855,410	286,015,465.00
Property	49,748,700	72,587,565.00
Service	164,169,440	276,878,380.00
Mining & Oil	117,951,800	64,508,320.00
GRAND TOTALS:	516,398,960	1,098,421,116.10

	AVERAGES	
Financial	660.83	DOWN 3.27
Industrial	3,045.90	DOWN 55.43
Holding Firms	1,043.45	DOWN 8.42
Property	879.36	DOWN 17.20
Service	1,035.58	DOWN 8.45
Mining & Oil	2,931.77	UP 17.26
All Shares Index	1,304.89	DOWN 12.36
Composite	2,121.91	DOWN 26.41

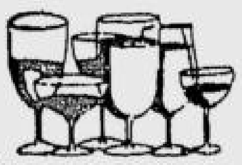
NO. OF ADVANCES: 32; NO. OF DECLINES: 42; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 55; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 129; NO. OF TRADES: 3,516

CURRENCIES

March 7, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.831947	1.000000	51.1020
Japan	Yen	0.007079	0.008509	0.4348
United Kingdom	Pound	1.456240	1.750400	89.4489
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.107224	0.128883	6.5862
Switzerland	Franc	0.640698	0.770119	39.3546
Canada	Dollar	0.729714	0.877116	44.8224
Singapore	Dollar	0.511150	0.614402	31.3972
Australia	Dollar	0.616622	0.741180	37.8758
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.207575	2.653505	135.5994
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.221847	0.266660	13.6269
Brunei	Dollar	0.509584	0.612520	31.3010
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000091	0.000109	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.021448	0.025780	1.3174
UAE	Dirham	0.226534	0.272294	13.9148
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.202000	61.4246
Argentina	Peso	0.270772	0.325468	16.6321
Brazil	Real	0.392835	0.472188	24.1298
Denmark	Kroner	0.134092	0.161179	8.2366
India	Rupee	0.018831	0.022635	1.1567
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.224487	0.269833	13.7890
Mexico	New Peso	0.077861	0.093589	4.7826
New Zealand	Dollar	0.547082	0.657592	33.6043
Norway	Kroner	0.125431	0.150768	7.7045
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013910	0.016720	0.8544
South Africa	Rand	0.133285	0.160208	8.1869
Korea	Won	0.000854	0.001026	0.0524
Sweden	Kroner	0.105970	0.127376	6.5092
Syria	Pound	0.016027	0.019264	0.9844
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025654	0.030836	1.5758
Venezuela	Bolivar	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Going, going, ...

COCKTALES



Victor C. Agustin

HALF OF THE 100,000 SEATS ALLOCATED for Cebu Pacific's P10 fare sale had been gobbled up as of Monday, only three days after the precedent-setting promo was announced.

In addition to the promo to mark the Gokongwei airline's 10th anniversary, the sale, according to the airline, was a massive test run for its newly installed Internet book-and-buy system.

A bonus: More and more locals are getting comfortable with online transactions.

One hundred thousand seats may look considerable but the number actually represents only about 7.5 percent of the 1.33 million domestic-seat capacity of Cebu Pacific for the June 20-Oct. 18 promo travel period.

The crazy sale was pushed through despite an admission from Cebu Pacific CEO Lance Gokongwei that the airline had registered a "small loss" in 2005 amid historic-high oil prices.

Today, incidentally, is the last day of the sale.

Ortigas mall challenge

SPURRED by the just-finished pedestrian-friendly facelift of SM Megamall, Robinsons Galleria has begun on broadening its bus stop-chocked Edsa entrance.

Escalators are also being installed to bring pedestrians from the sidewalk straight to the mall's second level, instead of the foot traffic crossing and clogging the street-level driveway that is also being used by the adjoining high-rise corporate building.

According to initial artist sketches, the flagship Robinsons Department Store will have a direct access to the new Edsa facade.

Called the West Wing, the Edsa side will also have wider hallways and hipper shops when renovation shall have been completed by the last quarter.

Money-go-round

- THE SHANG Grand Tower, the flagship residential condominium project of the Kuok/Shangri-La Group in Makati's Legaspi Village that had nearly been scuttled by the Asian currency crisis, will formally open this afternoon.
- THE JAGUAR-LAND Rover golf invitational will be held starting next Wednesday at the Sta. Elena Golf and Country Club. The hole-in-one prize? A P2.7-million Jaguar X, guaranteed fully insured, swears Jaguar-Land Rover distributor-dealer Wellington Soong.

To top it all, the winning team will get to compete in the June 11-16 Jaguar international tournament in Gleneagles, Scotland, no less.

- NESCAFE 3-in-1 coffee sachets have joined dried mangoes, local ice cream (the latter for Hong Kong- and Japan-bound passengers) and powdered *sinigang* broth as favorite *pasalubong* items for homesick Filipinos abroad.
- THIS month's opening of a Makati spa and clinic by French doctor Pierre Clero, who was introduced to local high society by way of his close links with Denise Yabut (the first wife of telecom-TV tycoon Antonio Cojuangco Jr.), is encountering 11th-hour rough sailing with the apparently bitter parting between the Frenchman and his former constant companion.

Heard through the grapevine

THE DWINDLING Blue Ladies circle of former first lady Imelda Marcos is being further split, with "EC" charging "BL" with financial improprieties.

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5-year treasury bond yield drops to 8.299%

By Michelle V. Remo

THE 5-YEAR TREASURY BOND RATE dropped to 8.299 percent yesterday due to the high level of liquidity among banks and fresh optimism brought by the release of positive fiscal figures for January.

The new rate for the 5-year bond was 20.1 basis points lower than the 8.5 percent set last Feb. 24, when the Bureau of the Treasury offered new 5-year bonds for swap with old government securities held by existing investors.

The auction yesterday was a re-issuance of the benchmark 5-year bonds that were offered last Feb. 24.

Appetite for the debt instrument was strong with the volume of bids reaching P11.92 billion or nearly three times the government's debt offering of only P4 billion. The government raised the entire amount of its scheduled borrowing.

"The drop in the rate was due mainly to the continued improvement on the fiscal front," said Jonathan Ravelas, market strategist for Banco de Oro. He said interest rates for bonds of other tenors, which will be issued in the following weeks, would likely decline as well.

The Department of Finance reported Monday that the budget deficit for January stood at only P15.4 billion, much lower than the P20.9-billion ceiling for the month.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said that aside from the positive fiscal data, the demand for the 5-year bonds was boosted by its liquid nature. He said the bonds were already trading actively in the secondary market at rates 20 to 25 basis points lower than the original coupon rate of 8.5 percent.

"Those who were not able to participate (in the Feb. 24 swap) liked to have the liquid benchmark bonds. That explains the oversubscription yesterday," Cruz said in a telephone interview.

Under the bond swap, the government exchanged old government securities with newly issued 5- and 7-year bonds. The swap allowed the government to stretch the average maturity of its domestic debts by one year from 4.7 years.

February inflation highest ...

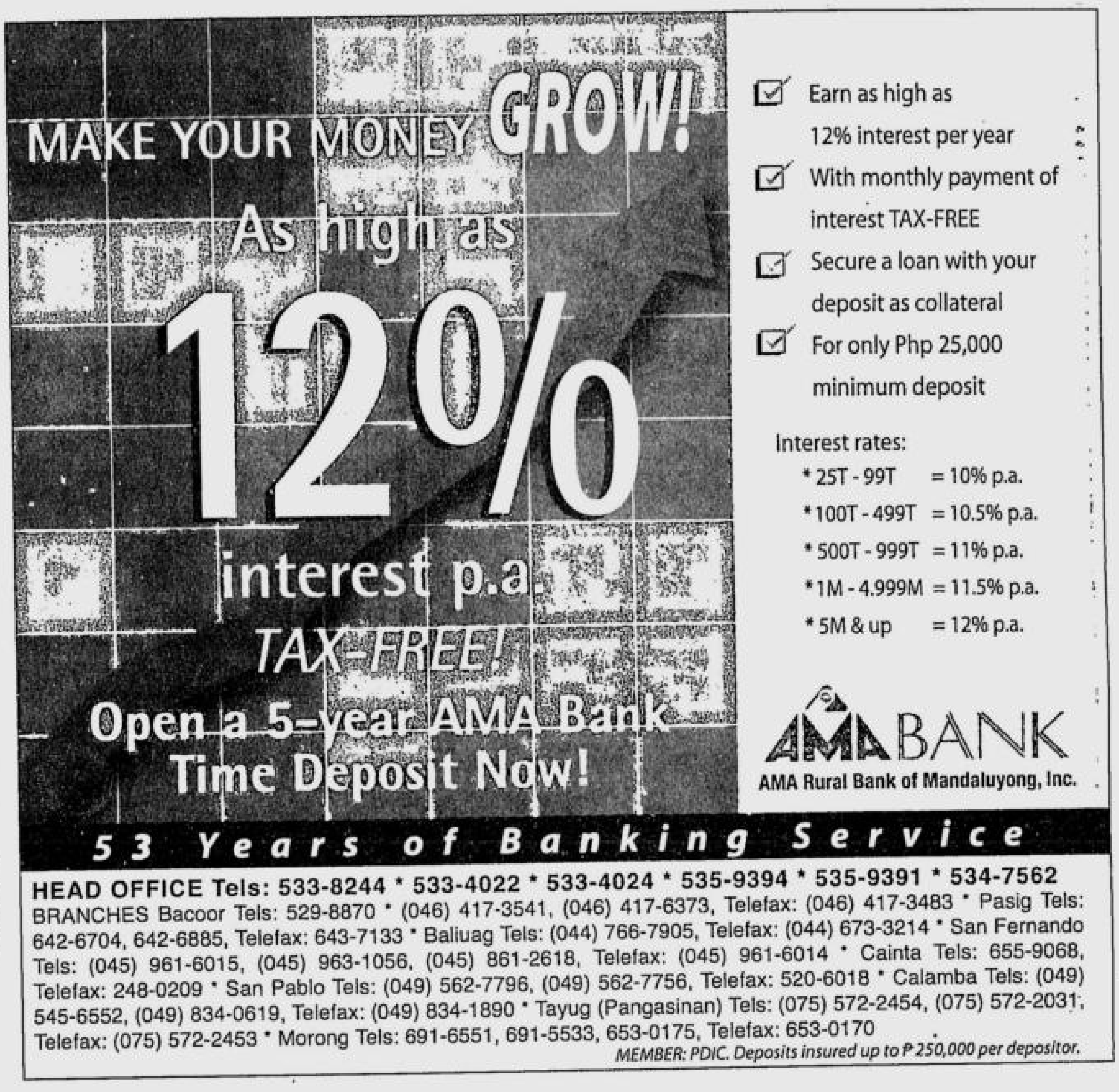
From page B1

However, the Neda is still recomputing the impact of the 12-percent VAT on full-year inflation, and Arroyo said initial indications showed that inflation for this year would only be near or at the February level of 7.6 percent because of the cushion provided by the appreciation of the peso.

"The strengthening of the peso makes imports cheaper and absorbs the burden caused by the higher VAT rate and high oil prices," Arroyo told the INQUIRER in an interview.

The government's original forecast for the peso was 56 to a dollar this year, but the local currency has breached the 50-to-$1 mark.

Arroyo noted that Dubai crude was projected to average between $56 and $60 a barrel this year, higher than last year's $49, but the inflationary impact of the increase in oil prices would be tempered by the strengthening of the peso.



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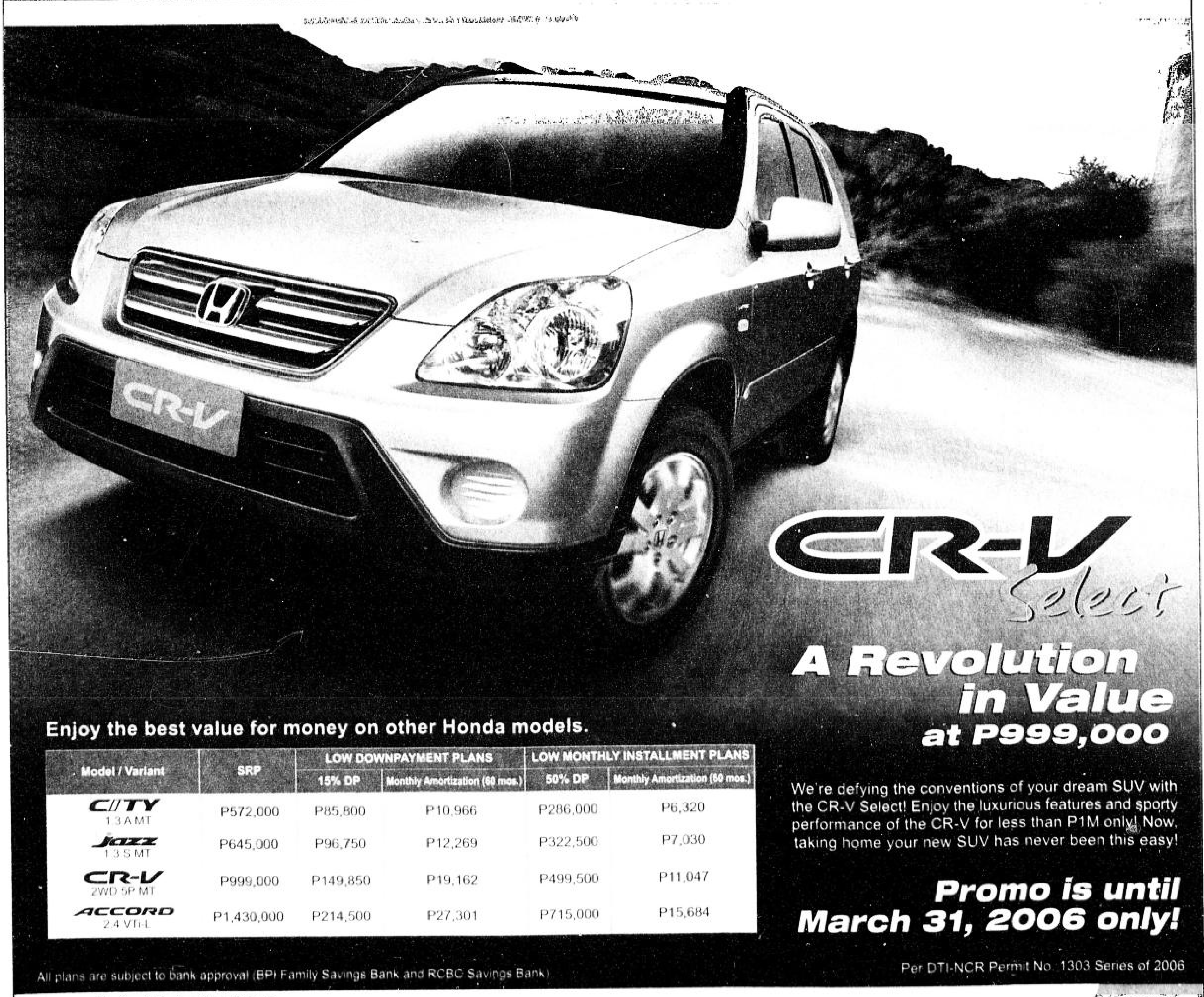

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Jazz 1.3 S MT	P645,000	P96,750	P12,269	P322,500	P7,030
CR-V 2WD 5P MT	P999,000	P149,850	P19,162	P499,500	P11,047
ACCORD 2.4 VTi-L	P1,430,000	P214,500	P27,301	P715,000	P15,684

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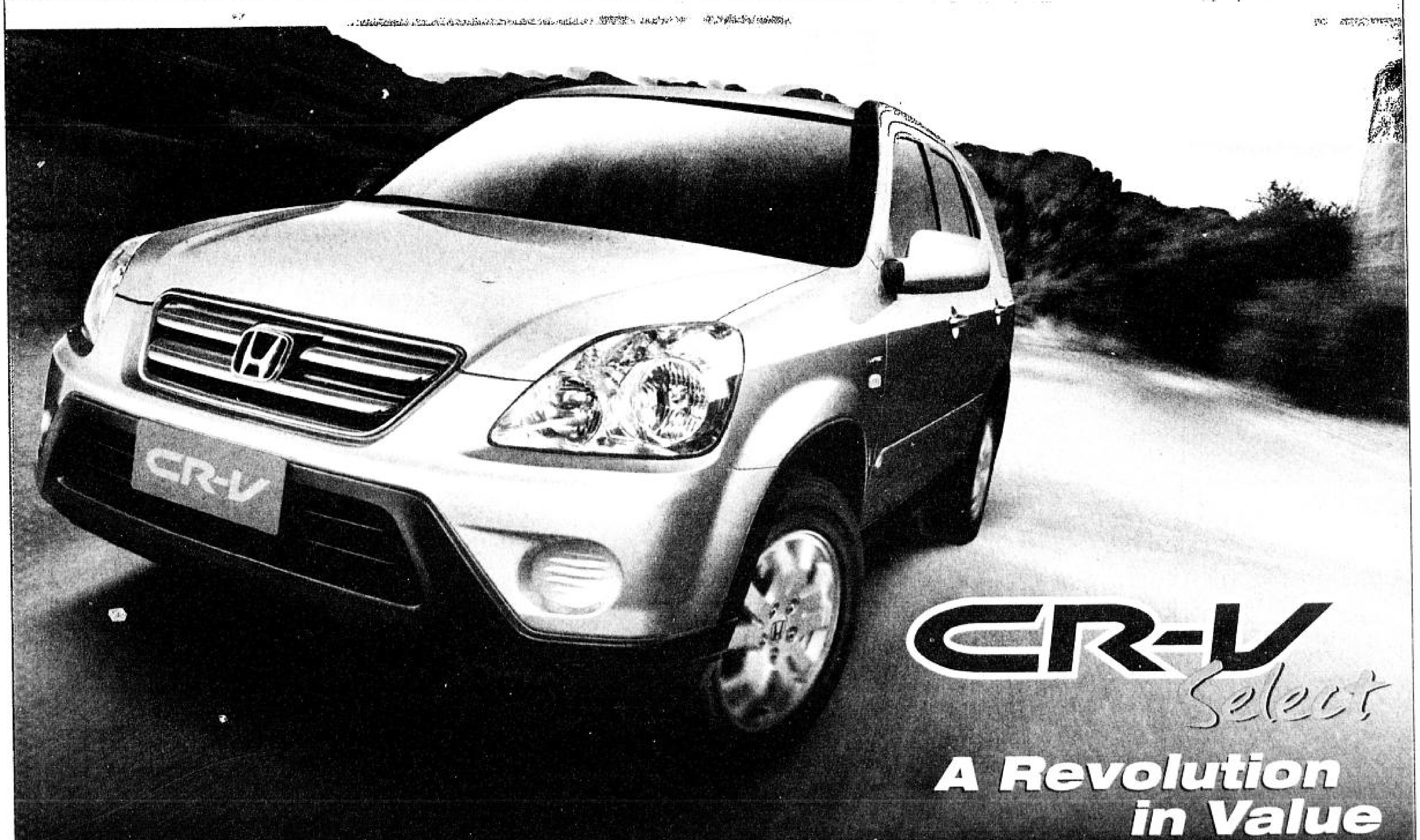

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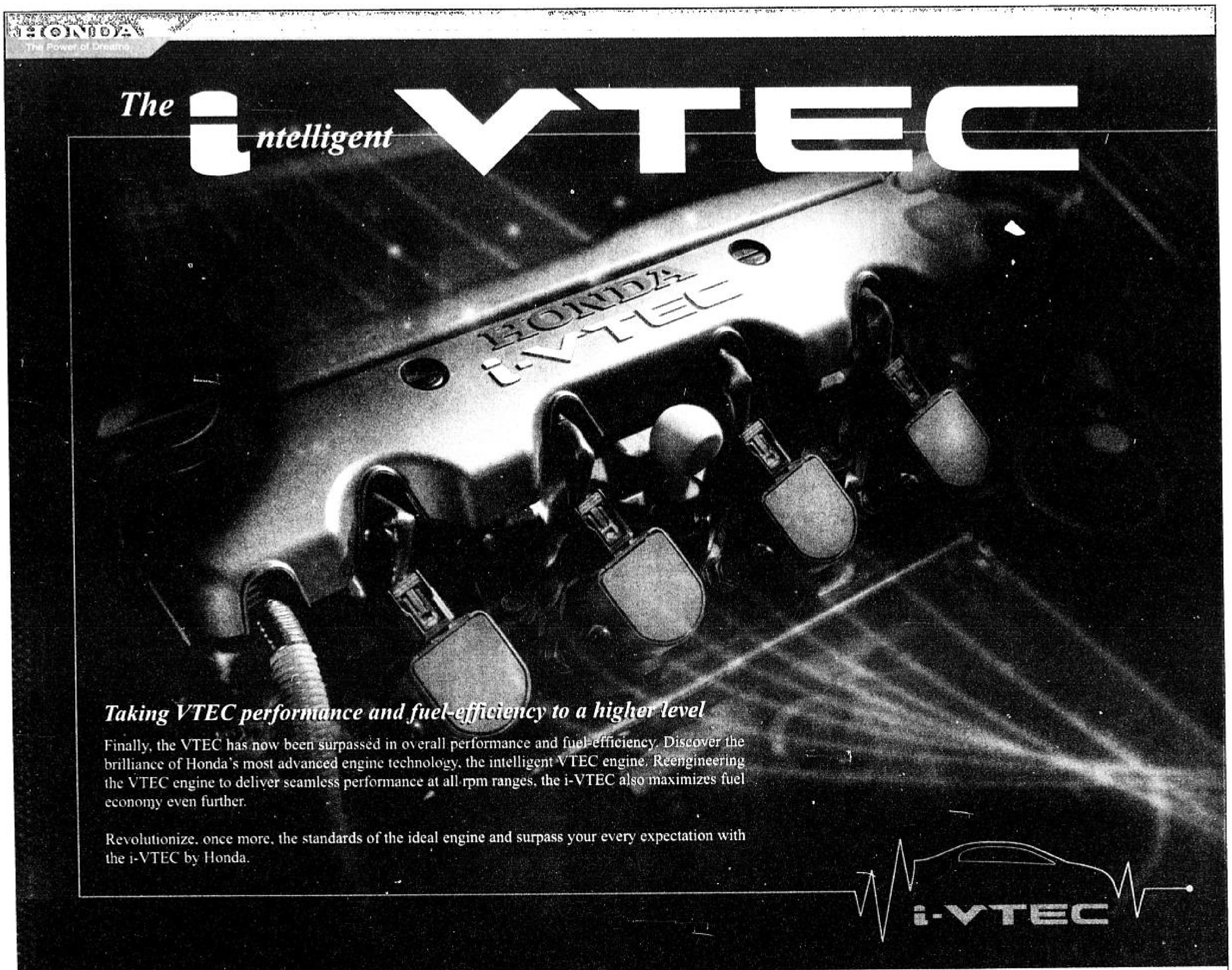

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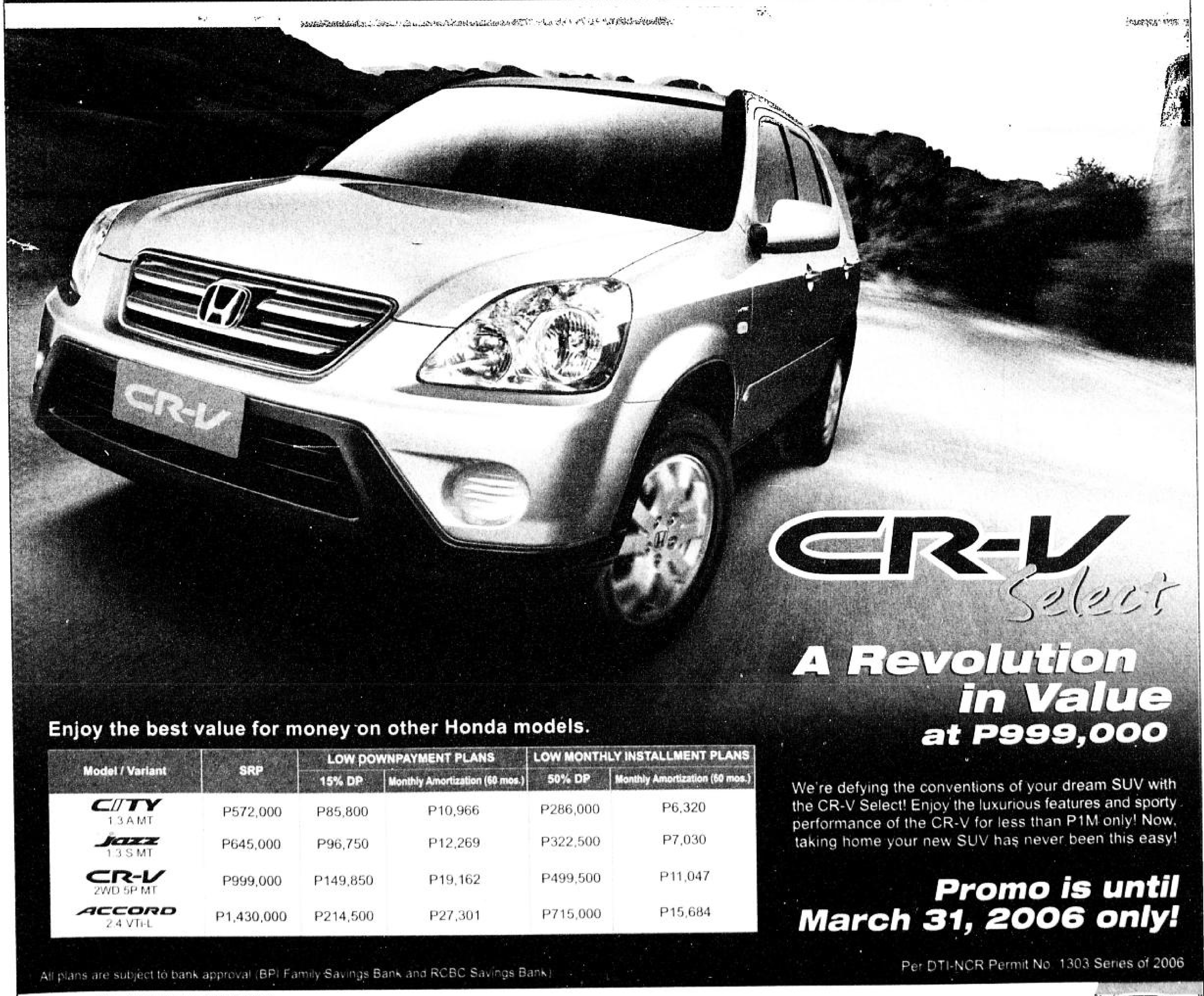

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HCMI history

HCMI'S ENTRY INTO THE automotive dealership came promisingly at a time of industry recovery and the advent of motorization in the country. We started as a one-unit showroom in March 1991 in Bicutan, Parañaque.

With the booming Philippine car market presenting growth opportunities for the company, HCMI inaugurated in 1992 a larger showroom at the Magallanes Commercial Center in Makati City to become the first Honda car dealership in the country to showcase various Honda variants.

The robust growth of the passenger car market in the 90s led to the establishment of three other strategically located dealerships namely Honda Cars Pasig in March 1994, Honda Cars Alabang in October 1996, and Honda Cars Shaw in March 1998.

A year after our operations, HCMI once again broke new grounds when we entered into a joint venture to establish Honda Cars Cebu, Inc. In August 1993, we opened our first provincial showroom and service center that marked the beginning of a sales push in the Visayas and Mindanao. The successful venture paved the way for the opening of branches in key markets to further expand our dealership network. These are Honda Cars Cagayan de Oro in September 1996; Honda Cars Negros Occidental in October 1997; Honda Cars Iloilo satellite office in 1994 until its expansion to dealer operations in May 2000; Honda Cars Mandaue in August 2003. HCCI became a wholly-owned subsidiary of HCMI in August 1998.

> HCMI's entry into the automotive dealership came promisingly at a time of industry recovery and the advent of motorization in the country

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- **HCMI Mileage Plus** -serving the motoring needs of our customers, the HCMI Mileage Plus package makes available a roster of service assistance and privileges to its members as an appreciation of our customers' loyalty.

HCMI
MILEAGE PLUS
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Customer Service: Adding more value to our partnership

AT THE CORE OF HCMI'S BUSINESS IS OUR thrust to nurture and value the relationship with our customers. Through various customer-care activities, whether these are knowledge-enriching activities like driving and car-care seminars, action-packed sports events and tournaments, fun-filled kiddie parties or exciting family-oriented events, HCMI finds reasons to bond and celebrate with our customers.

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PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT MANAGER

Must have at least 5 years of comprehensive experience in all processes for the production of Servo Motors. The incumbent must also be knowledgeable in planning and process control for servo motor systems using IZUMI production control software. Successful applicant shall also assume the duties and responsibilities of a Production Control Department in charge in the planning and control for production of Servo Motors.

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

The **PSORIASIS FOUNDATION OF THE PHILIPPINES, INC.** wishes to inform the general public that the draw date for the **"RAFFLE FOR A CAUSE"** for the benefit of the indigent psoriasis patients in Mindanao which was originally scheduled on March 8, 2006 has been moved to August 9, 2006.

The raffle draw will be held at the Out-Patient Services, Department of Dermatology, Davao Medical Center.

Thank you for bearing with us.

(Sgd.) **MA. ASSUMPTA CECILLA R. SERRANO, M.D.**
President
Psoriasis Foundation of the Philippines

(PDI--March 8, 2006)

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

In compliance with the POEA Rules and Regulations governing the recruitment and employment of landbased overseas Filipino workers, notice is hereby given that ZDRIVE, Inc. (the "Applicant") is in the process of applying with the POEA for the issuance of a License to Recruit Overseas Filipino Workers. Following are the newly appointed Board of Directors and Officers of Applicant.

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Vice President:
SHEILA DODSON-ANG
Chief Financial Officer/
VP for Operations (International Recruitment):
ELIZABETH MALABANAN
Secretary:
ANILINE VIDAL
Board Members:
DAISUKE SOMA
NAOKI NAKAYAMA
SHERILL BASILIO

ZDRIVE, Inc.
Block 1, Lot 3, Zavalla Village III,Tagapo St.,
City of Sta. Rosa, Laguna

(PDI--Mar. 8, 2006)

More Classified Ads on pages A10, A16-A19 & A21

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that CANLUBANG GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB Stock Certificate No. 1767 representing one (1) share issued in the name of FUJITSU COMPUTER PRODUCTS CORPORATION OF THE PHILS. was lost as per Affidavit of Loss dated February 20, 2006 of Notary Public Atty. Mariano Villanueva of Calamba City as per Doc. No. 166, Page No. 35 Book No. 172, Series of 2006 If no contest is received, a new certificate will be issued.

(PDI--Feb. 22, Mar 1 & 8, 2006)

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(PDI - March 8, 2006)

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OBITUARIES

Estefania Aldaba-Lim

1917-2006

Cheche, Nina, Bertie, Louie Jr., Patty and Ricky bade our beloved Mommy goodbye as she peacefully joined Daddy Looie on 7 March 2006. After Daddy passed on 44 years ago, Mommy took charge and raised us all by herself while managing a busy career. Well done, Mommy!

We and our respective spouses, Del Lazaro, Joey Yuson (†), Carla Abreu, Frieda Colet, Winnie Yusah and Regina Valdes as well as our children Lisa and Charlie Lazaro, Tanya, Nikki & Jay de Guzman, Chino and Zak Yuson, Enzo, Laszlo and Liana Lim, Danni, Franco and Samantha Lim, Zeke, Mikey and Willi Yusah, Quintin and Lope Lim, enjoin you to wish her a happy journey to a better life.

We will be with her remains at Santuario de San Antonio from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. until 9 March 2006. Funeral mass will be held on 10 March 2006 at 9 a.m. at the church.

She was energized in her last days by her Gawad Kalinga Aldaba Hills Village project in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. As an alternative to flowers, an equivalent offering made through the Luis H. Lim Memorial Foundation would be expended for the beneficiaries of her project.

OBITUARIES

TEODORO "SONNY" L. SAMANIEGO

Passed away last February 28, 2006
at the age of 60.

He is survived by his wife **JULIE**; children **MELODY, MABELLE** and **TESS**; sons-in-law **EMMANUEL** and **ERNESTO**; sister and brother-in-law **CYNTHIA** and **GEORGE**; niece and nephew-in-law **ZARIE** and **CHARLES**; and grandchildren **MIGGY, LEXI** and **BRANDEN**.

His remains lie in state at his residence at 1055 Solis Street, Tondo, Manila.

Interment will be tomorrow, March 9, 2006 at 1:00 p.m. at Eternal Gardens, Baesa, Quezon City.

Readers are requested to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

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3rd ACPID and 13th PIDSP annual confab set March 7-10

THE ASIAN SOCIETY FOR PEDIATRIC INFECTIOUS DISEASES, THE Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines and the Philippine Pediatric Society, Cebu Central and Eastern Visayas Chapters will host the 3rd Asian Congress of Pediatric Infectious Diseases (ACPID) and the 13th Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines (PIDSP) Annual Convention on March 7-10 at the Waterfront International Convention Center, Lahug, Cebu City. With the theme "Pediatric Infections in the 21st Century: Meeting the Challenges," the convention will feature distinguished international and local speakers who will give lectures on topics like common and emerging pediatric infections, new antimicrobials and antimicrobial resistance and vaccines. For particulars, please call or email the Secretariat: Asian Society for Pediatric Infectious Diseases (ASPID) Unit 4, Metro Square Townhomes, No. 35, Sct. Tuazon corner Sct. De Guia St., Quezon City, Tel. Nos. (632)526-9167 or 374-1855, Fax No. (632) 404-2397 or 412-6998, Email: aspid@uplink.com.ph; pidsp@uplink.com.ph or Philippine Pediatric Society, Inc. Cebu Central and Eastern Visayas Chapter, Tel. Nos. (32) 253-9654 or (32) 412-3989

Our Dearly Beloved

MARIA HIDALGO DUCLAYAN

(January 16, 1907 – March 6, 2006)
of San Fernando, La Union and Quezon City

*Peacefully joined her husband, **Pedro** and son, **Elmer***
on March 6, 2006 at the age of 99.

Her children **Elmer** (†) & **Alice, Gloria & Ning Santos**; grandchildren **Jeanne & Jean Espiritu, Aileen & Jeff Cheng, Margarita Duclayan, Gloria Santos, Jr. & Juan Paolo Santos**; great grandchildren **Patrick Espiritu, Enzo & Andre Cheng** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at Chapel C-12, La Funeraria Paz located at G. Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Cremation will be tomorrow, March 9, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. after the 8:00 a.m. Mass.

"Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth
and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if
it dies, it produces much fruit." John 12:24-25

Our Dearly Beloved

ZACARIAS TALAVERA PANGILINAN

of Gapan, Nueva Ecija and San Juan, Metro Manila

*Peacefully joined our Lord and his wife **AMPARO***
on March 5, 2006 at the age of 77.

His bereaved children **RHODA, ROEHL, RHODERICK & MAE** and **ROCHELLE**, nephews, nieces and their families and all other relatives and friends request the readers to pray for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His remains lie in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be tomorrow,
March 9, 2006 at the Sanctuario del Sto. Cristo,
F. Blumentritt St., San Juan,
Metro Manila after the 9 a.m. Mass.

Roadshow plays up RP's fiscal stance

By Michelle V. Remo

PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC OFFICIALS YESterday left for Singapore for a three-day roadshow to woo foreign businessmen to invest in the Philippines.

The officials will make the country's improving fiscal climate as their key selling point.

The roadshow followed the lifting last Friday of the state of national emergency, which President Macapagal-Arroyo had declared to foil attempts to topple her administration and destabilize the economy.

On Monday, the government announced that its budget deficit for January stood at only 15.4 billion—lower than the official ceiling of P20.9 billion set for the month—on account of higher revenues and prudent spending.

The lower-than-programmed deficit kept the government on track of its goal of trimming down its full-year budget gap to only P125 billion this year from P146.5 billion in 2005. The government likewise said the medium-term goal of a zero deficit by 2008 was within reach.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the country's economic managers would update potential investors on the fiscal and economic developments in the Philippines. They will likewise stress the point that the government's commitment to attain its economic targets will not be affected by any political disturbance.

Teves will be joined by Trade and Industry Secretary Peter Favila and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor Nestor Espenilla.

The Arroyo administration, battered by allegations of corruption and fraud in the 2004 elections, credits itself with improving economic indicators brought about by strict observance of its development agenda.

Despite a week of "national emergency," the peso has remained strong, staying within the 51-to-a-dollar level.

The road show in Singapore will be the second of a series aimed at luring more investments to the Philippines. The roadshow this week follows the recently concluded event in Japan, where economic managers took home commitments from several Japanese firms to pour in money into the country.

WINGS AND A PRAYER
Fr. Eduardo Apungan (foreground) blesses the Philippine Airlines' new Airbus A320 jet at the hangar of Lufthansa Technik Philippines in the presence of PAL officials and staff led by president Jaime J. Bautista. PAL last week took delivery of its ninth Airbus jet—the last in a series of replacement aircraft to join its fleet before the flag carrier kicks off a comprehensive modernization program for its narrow-body fleet in September.

Philippines, China work on improving product standards

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUStry yesterday announced that it had signed with a Chinese agency a memorandum of understanding on industrial products safety that would ensure the quality and safety of products traded between the two countries.

"Ultimately, this cooperation would ensure consumers, as well as businesses, that industrial products imported from China would pass through proper inspection before being shipped in," said Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila.

The trade chief added that the agreement would not only ensure the safety and reliability of foreign goods entering the local market, it would also promote scientific cooperation between the Philippines and China.

Favila said the MOU with China's General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine would also remove "unreasonable technical barriers to trade" and enhance the exchange of information, particularly on technical regulations on industrial products.

He said the MOU showed the commitment of both countries to establish a consultative cooperation mechanism in the field of industrial products safety, in line with the principles of the World Trade Organization.

Trade between China and the Philippines are expected to expand even more, with the latter expected to benefit from yearly surplus as the two countries move toward a free trade regime by 2010.

Chinese firm tries to break into competitive RP telco market

By Daxim L. Lucas

CHINESE TELECOMMUNICATIONS equipment maker Huawei Technologies yesterday renewed its efforts to break into the lucrative local market, launching an exhibit to showcase its new networking products.

In a statement, Huawei said the drive is aimed at attracting local firms like PLDT, Smart Communications Inc., Globe Telecom Inc., Innove and Digitel.

Huawei has been in the Philippines since 1999, but has so far been overshadowed in the local market which is dominated by European manufacturers like Ericsson, Nokia and Siemens.

During the launching ceremonies, Chinese ambassador Li Jinjun stressed the importance of increase trade between the Philippines and China and noted the role that Huawei can potentially play in expanding bilateral trade.

"We want to improve trade with the Philippines because the Philippines is a very important member of Asean," Li told reporters.

Huawei's products, he said, are recognized around the world for their quality and innovation, at par with the technology offered by rivals in Europe and the United States.

Huawei's local officials also said that the company is "committed to the Asia-Pacific and the Philippines' telecoms growth."

Huawei has been commissioned by users in 97 countries. It is also the preferred supplier of British Telecom's 21st Century Network.

Group bucks oil firms on biodiesel use

By Abigail L. Ho

NO MATTER WHAT THE COUNTRY'S LEADing oil firms may say, The Philippine Biodiesel Association (TPBA) is still pushing for the mandatory sale and use of pre-blended coco-biodiesel, saying numerous tests the world over have proven the stability of the product.

The country's major oil firms are claiming that coco-biodiesel is a relatively "untested" product, and that it may cause damage to storage tanks and vehicle engines in the long run.

But TPBA said the product actually conformed to Philippine National Standards for biodiesel and even met European and American diesel standards.

This means that diesel blended with coco methyl ester (CME) have undergone enough tests to be endorsed by the Department of Energy for use in motor vehicles.

TPBA said that similar products of inferior quality—or biodiesel derived from soybean and rapeseed—had been tested and accepted in both Europe and the United States.

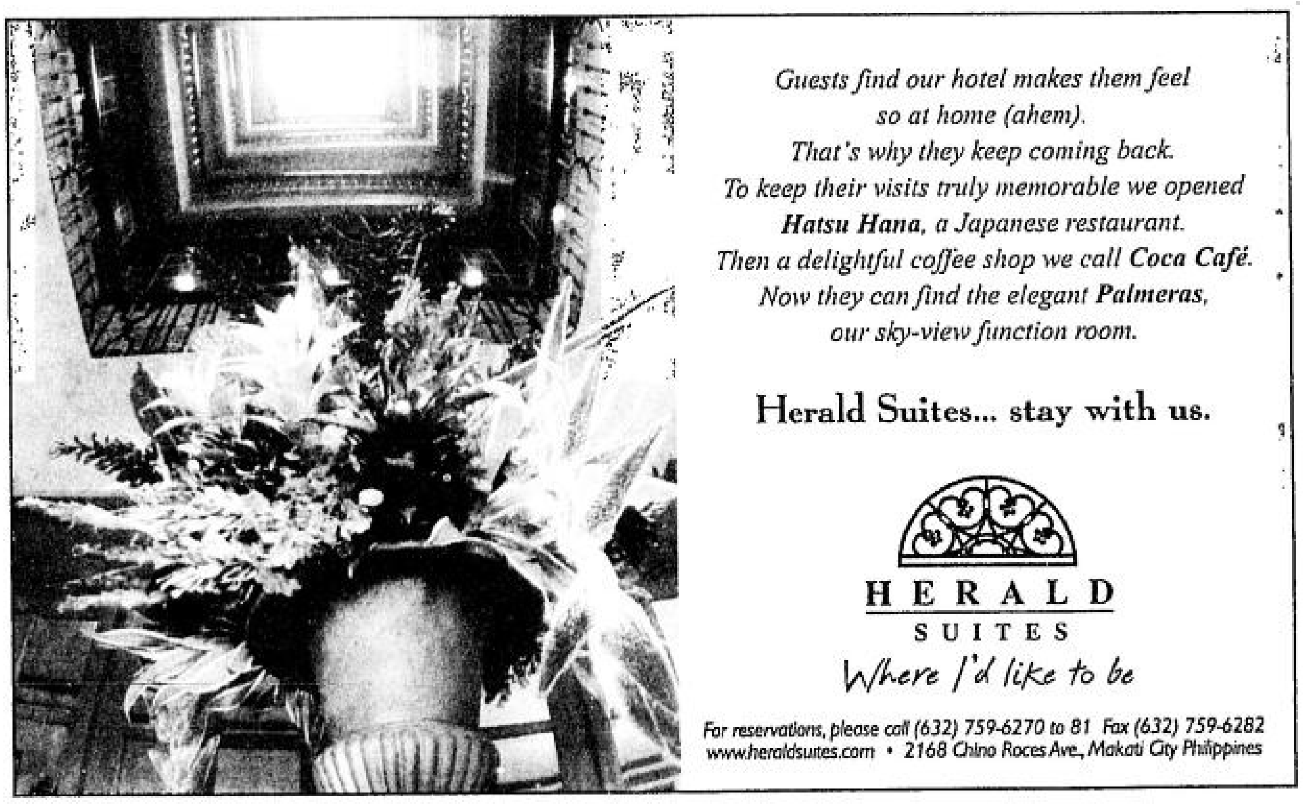
Also, the group noted that oil companies all over the world had been using ester from coconut fraction as a component for aviation fuel.

If the product could be used for more sensitive engines such as jet engines, the group said there was no reason why it could not work well with ordinary vehicle engines.

Also, CME-blended diesel was unlikely to cause corrosion or rust problems on storage tanks as CME was a "polar compound and has features that inhibit corrosion."

On the issue of bacterial growth, the group said this was not much of a concern as CME repelled water. The group explained that diesel and CME only became exposed to bacterial growth "when there is water."

Top oil firms Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Chevron Philippines Inc. (formerly Caltex Philippines Inc.) have all opposed the sale of pre-blended coco-biodiesel directly from their pumps. They said more tests had to be conducted on the product.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ROUND-UP

Ayala Land reviews plan for Canlubang

AYALA LAND INC. PLANS TO CONVERT ITS 1,000-HECTARE PROPERTY in Canlubang, Laguna into an integrated mixed-use project, according to ALI chief finance officer Jaime Ysmael.

"The master plan for Canlubang is being reviewed. It is a very large parcel (of land), and development will be over a very long period of time. It is bigger than Makati and Alabang," Ysmael said.

In 1993, ALI bought controlling interest over 1,300 hectares of land in Canlubang, Laguna through a joint venture with the Yulo family.

This year, ALI is setting aside P900 million of its P16-billion capital expenditure budget for land banking.

The bulk, or P9.1 billion, will go to the leisure and residential projects of Ayala Land Premiere, Community Innovations and its affordable housing arm, Avida Land.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Global Steel back in operation

GLOBAL STEEL PHILIPPINES INC., FORMERLY THE NATIONAL STEEL Corp., yesterday said it has started selling hot-rolled coils or raw materials for steel products, putting it back in "full commercial operation."

Sangram Mohanty, GSPI chief for corporate communications, said this was a big achievement for the country as the firm moved toward full integration of the local steel industry.

Mohanty said this meant the country was one step closer to becoming self-sufficient in steel products.

The Philippines is estimated to import 200 to 300 million tons of hot-rolled coils a year.

Hot-rolled coils are used to produce cold-rolled coils (CRCs), which are in turn used to make industrial goods, such as automobile components, precision tubes and consumer durables.

The hot strip mill last operated in November 1999 under NSC and underwent full rehabilitation under GSPI management in May last year.

Ronnel W. Domingo

IPO sanctions 2 firms for IPR violations

THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE YESTERDAY SAID IT HAS SANCtioned two food firms for trademark violations.

IPO Philippines Director General Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. said Sehwani, Inc. and Benita's Frites Inc. were found "guilty of unfair competition" and ordered them to pay In-N-Out Burger Inc. of the US a total of P1.2 million in damages and attorney's fees for violating its IPR.

IPO data show that In-N-Out Burger Inc. is a US-based burger company with 93 stores in California, Nevada and Arizona while offices of both Sehwani and Benita's Frites are located in Pasig City.

Cristobal said that the decision should serve as a warning to individuals and firms to strictly observe and respect the country's intellectual property laws.

Ronnel W. Domingo

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Move seen to curb TV signal theft

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE LOCAL CABLE TELEVISION INDUSTRY inched closer to ending the widespread practice of illegal signal tapping after the House of Representatives passed a bill last week penalizing offenders.

The umbrella organization of cable TV operators, however, said that more work had to be done to stop illegal signal tapping. The Senate, for instance, has has yet to produce a counterpart bill, it said.

"This (the measure) will help the industry, because millions of pesos are lost every year [to theft]," Philippine Cable Television Association president Tony V. Selda said in a telephone interview.

Independent estimates show that as much as 50 percent of households that use cable TV services are either connected illegally or have extension lines to other television units that are not registered.

He said the bill—once enacted into law—would help deter theft even if it classified illegal cable tapping as a mere misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of P2,000 for the first offense and P5,000 for the second offense.

"You only need one sample [conviction]," he said, explaining that successful prosecution will help deter potential violators. At present, Selda said many households tap into cable TV signals with impunity, knowing that enforcement was weak and existing penalties were light.

The PCTA chief conceded, however, that an anti-cable theft law would address only part of the problem since it would still not cover cable TV signal theft done at the level of cable operators.

"This practice is widespread," he said.

Selda said there were several cases of cable theft pending before the justice department but the process had been slow.

In some cases, he said that the legal process was hampered by cable operators that invoked their connections with prominent politicians in an effort to have the charges against them dropped.

Construction services exports up 13.3% in '05

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE CONSTRUCTION SERVICES INDUSTRY posted a 13.3-percent increase in export earnings to $25 million last year from $22 million in the previous year.

The Department of Trade and Industry's Construction Industry Authority said most of the earnings came from contracts covering site developments, building designs, airport, railways and industrial plants construction, electric power generation, civil works, irrigation and flood control projects.

Last year, construction services exporters won 0 contracts for projects that included the Royal Regalia Sultan's Museum in Brunei, Black Point Power Station in Hong Kong, Zhong Shan Shari-a Hotel in China, and Palau Pacific Resort.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said the projects provided jobs for 1,530 overseas Filipino construction workers.

"This proves that Filipino ingenuity is competitive and is able to (meet) the demands of the international market," Favila said.

In a related development, local furniture and building material suppliers earned some $4.8 million during their participation in the biggest home builders' fair in the Middle East held late last year.

Trade Assistant Secretary Fe Agoncillo-Reyes said 2005 earnings were 60 percent higher than the $3 million earned from Index 2004 held in Dubai.

Reyes, who is also chief of the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (Citem), said Index remained an important event for the home furnishings industry as the show provided local manufacturers the opportunity to take advantage of the "exponentially progressive growth of the public and private infrastructure projects in Dubai and the rest of the Gulf states."

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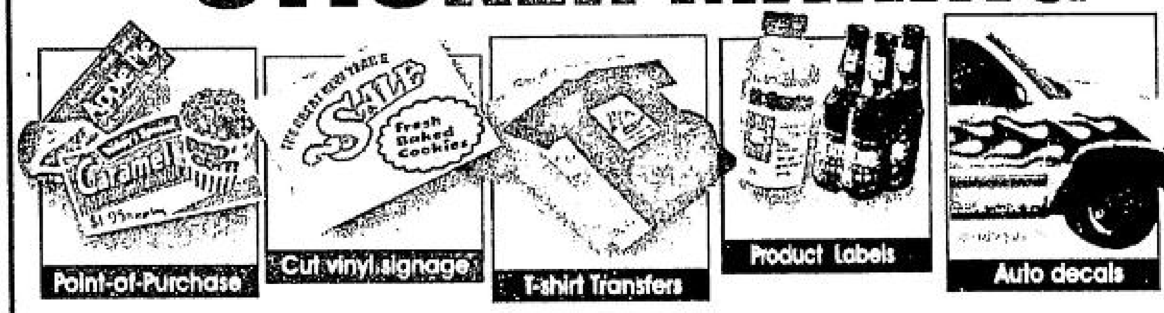

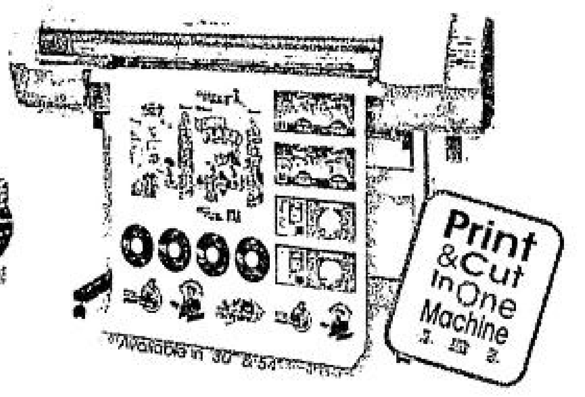

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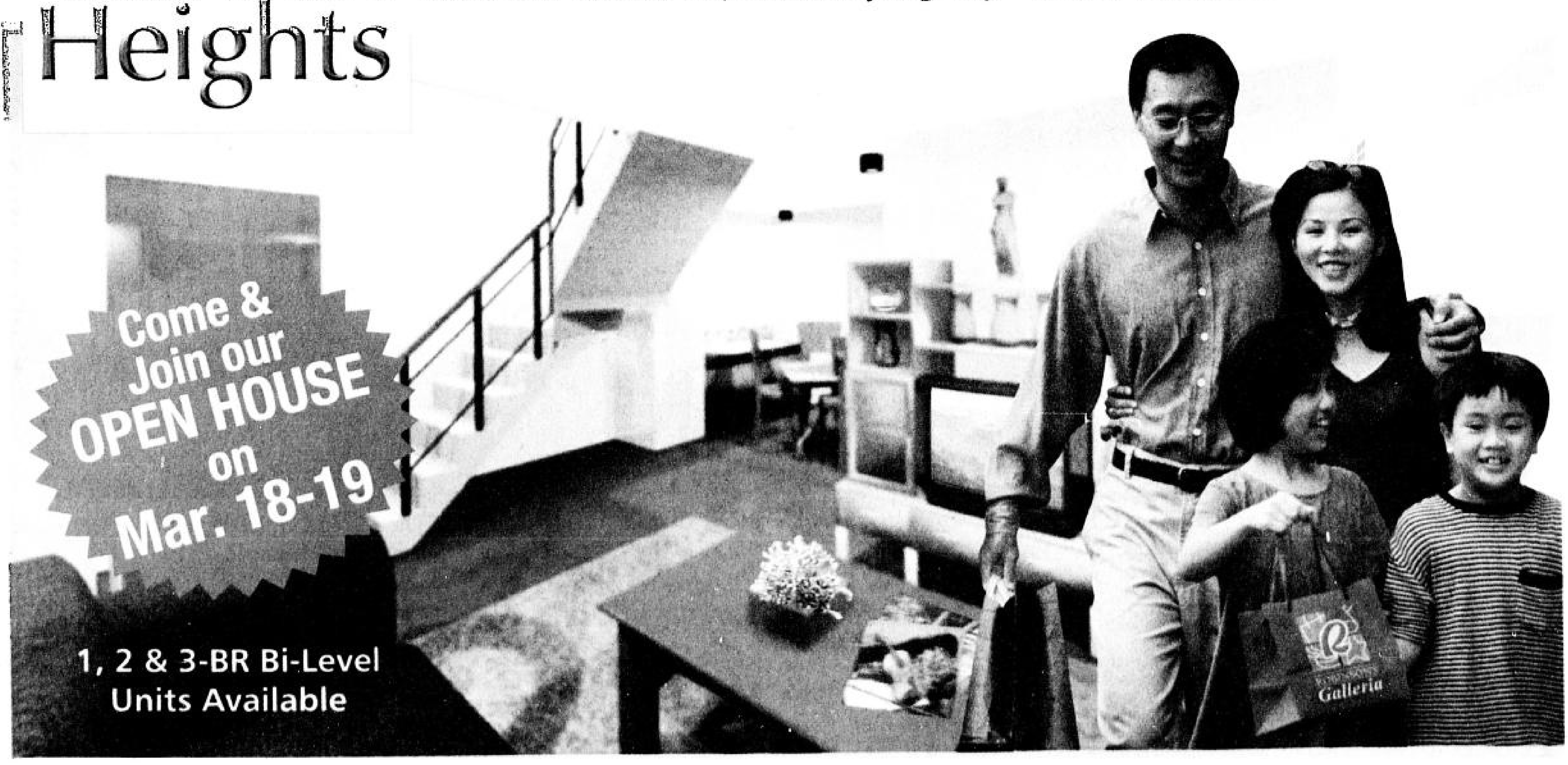

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Off-road and off-the-record in Oman

By Tessa R. Salazar

MUSCAT, OMAN—This won't be your normal Sunday drive in the park, that's what's certain.

What's not certain, and is just being revealed to INQUIRER Motoring since Monday in the picturesque but extremely arid setting of the southeast Arabian Peninsula, is a desert "beast" from DaimlerChrysler.

What this beast is, and can do, is still under wraps (or should we say still beneath the shifting dunes of Oman) for the motoring public.

DaimlerChrysler let select motoring journalists get behind the wheels of the desert "beast"

Classic design

DaimlerChrysler has been mum on the centerpiece product of this driving program in Oman, and has instructed motoring media people present to keep their mouths shut and pens capped as well. Suffice to say, the only hint the maker of the Jeep allows us to divulge to readers is that this vehicle sports a classic design and can seat seven Omanis.

With the intrigue mounting, DaimlerChrysler has this week brought select motoring journalists from the Middle East, United Kingdom, Southeast Asia, Turkey, Russia, Czech Republic, Serbia, Montenegro, Hungary and Poland to this desert country and get behind the wheels of what DaimlerChrysler and its exclusive Philippine distributor CATS Motors Inc. has scheduled to formally introduce to the Philippine market this year.

But right now, motoring journalists from tropical climes are just getting used to the arid weather of Oman, and finding out to their surprise that the Sultanate is "greener" than some of its neighboring countries.

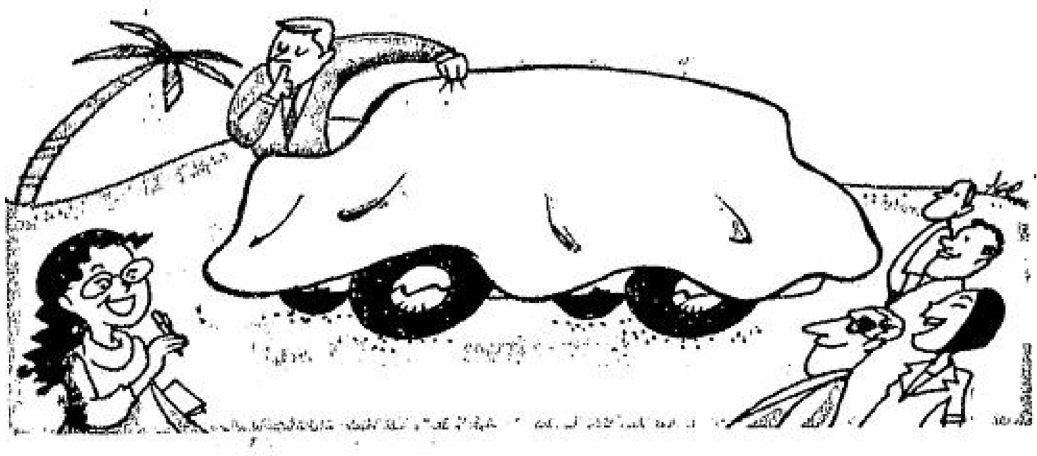
The drive around Oman began Tuesday, with desert driving to be concluded at the end of the week.

Stadium-style seating

The three rows of stadium-style seating (another hint here) gave all occupants an optimal view of the breathtaking panoramas of Oman.

The Philippine launch of this vehicle would also signal the start of a sustained product offensive for DaimlerChrysler and CATS Motors for the next two years in this vehicle segment.

The home base of the program is at the posh Al Bustan Palace InterContinental Muscat, considered the best hotel in the Middle East and is called "the Jewel of the Sultanate of Oman."



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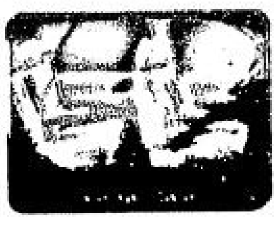

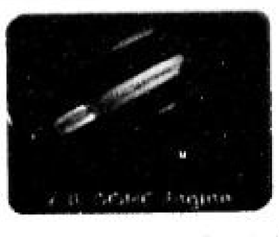

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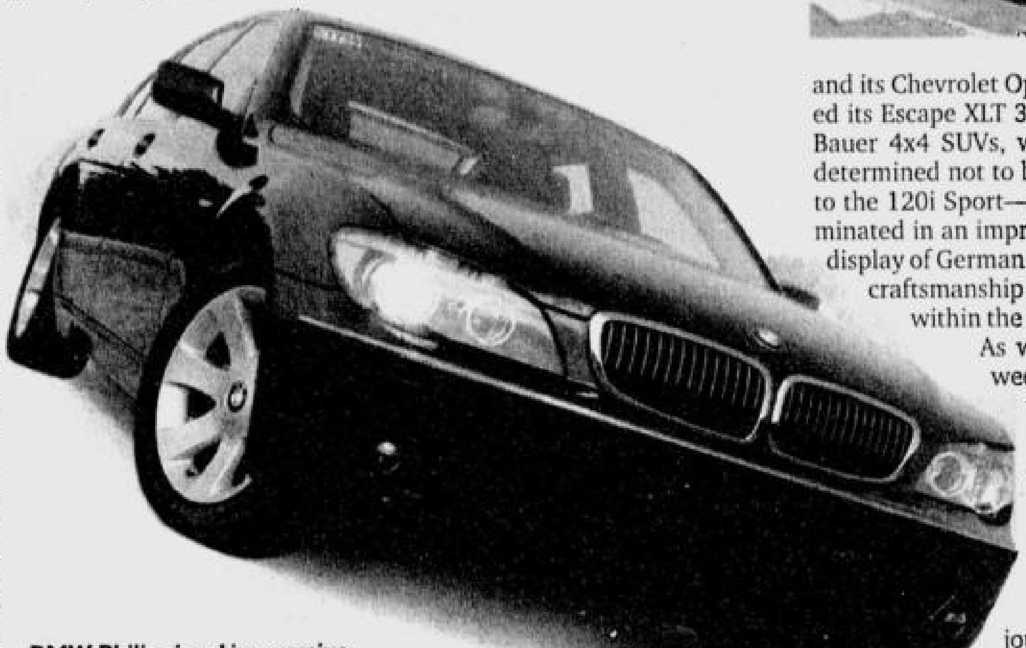
Coty-P ends 2005 test-fest with P29-M worth of vehicles

THESE are the vehicles that were tested during the "make-up" session.

PHOTOS BY ULYSSES ANG, MOTIONCARS.COM

THE CAR OF THE YEAR-PHILIPPINES (Coty-P) spent the last weekend of February as a "make-up" session for vehicles that were not able to make it to their respective testing dates. Held at the Forest Hills Golf and Country Club in Antipolo, Rizal on Feb. 25-26, the evaluation featured 12 vehicles from four different manufacturers with a total combined retail price of over P29 million.

BMW Philippines came with an impressive lineup of vehicles in nearly every segment—the 730 Ld (long wheelbase, diesel version), the 530i Executive, the 320i Sport (E90), the 120i Sport, the X3 2.0d (diesel m/t) and the X5 3.0d (diesel). The 730Ld quickly got most of the attention from the motoring journalists and Coty-P members present at Forest Hills, due to the fact that Coty-P members had their first—and perhaps, their only—chance to test BMW's ultraluxury saloon.



BMW Philippines' impressive lineup of vehicles included this ultraluxury saloon.

Not to be outdone was General Motors, which brought along its Chevrolet Aveo 1.5L and its Chevrolet Optra 1.6L wagon. Ford toted its Escape XLT 3.0L and Expedition Eddie Bauer 4x4 SUVs, while Mercedes-Benz was determined not to be left out with its answer to the 120i Sport—the B 170. The event culminated in an impressive, neat and arranged display of German and American automobile craftsmanship at one of the cul-de-sacs within the Forest Hills test course.

As with the previous test-fest weekends, all 12 vehicles were subjected to quantitative probing and qualitative analysis. Each vehicle's performance was logged on a current model GTech meter and a computer.

The qualitative test gave journalists and Coty-P members alike the opportunity to drive each vehicle in a predetermined route around Forest Hills to gauge different automobile aspects, mapped out and designed by rally veterans Raul Asuncion, Barry Ortiz and Joey Lanuza.

The vehicles were rated and tested by motoring journalists from different broadsheets, magazines, TV shows and websites.

The 2005 Coty-P test-fest is sponsored by the Manila Motor Show, Rockwell Land Corp., Philippine Allied Corp. (sole distributor of Bridgestone tires in the country), Petron, Standard Insurance, road safety advocate Federal Express Corp., Manila North Tollways Corp (MNTC), Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), Automobile Association Philippines (AAP), Fusion R Motorsports and motioncars.com.

The unveiling of the Car of the Year-Philippines is on March 30 at the Rockwell Tent, The Powerplant Mall, Makati City. The public unveiling of the winner will coincide with the opening of the Manila International Motor Show on April 7 at the World Trade Center on Roxas Boulevard.

Volvo models best in interior air quality, says new study

AN INDEPENDENT SURVEY CARried out by the Ecology Center in Detroit shows that the interiors of Volvo's cars emit lower levels of toxic substances than other car makes.

The Ecology Center recently presented a study (Toxic at Any Speed: Chemicals in Cars and the Need for Safe Alternatives) of the toxic chemicals used in building car interiors. Flame retardant PBDE and phthalates, whose main use is as a softener in plastics, were included in the study.

These chemical substances can migrate from plastics and textiles, particularly at high temperatures. The car's occupants may thus be exposed to these substances, for instance through the respiratory system. Certain types of phthalates and flame retardants can, for instance, promote genetic mutations and can subject car occupants to health hazards.

The survey reveals that the concentrations of PBDE in dust and on the windscreen are up to five times higher than in the homes of most people, and since many people today spend a lot of time in their cars, car interiors thus have a significant effect on human health.

Lowest phthalate emissions

The Ecology Center carried out the survey on 11 different makes of car built between 2000 and 2005. The results show that the interiors of Volvo's cars have the lowest emissions of phthalates. There was even a lower incidence of flame retardant PBDE in Volvo's models than in most other cars, which according to the research institute, makes Volvo a world leader in the area of interior air quality.

The Ecology Center encourages other car manufacturers to follow Volvo's example.

More than crash protection

"In an age when many people suffer from asthma and allergies, it is only natural for Volvo Cars to offer its customers a good environment even inside the car," comments Anders Kärrberg, environmental director at Volvo Cars.

In order to meet Volvo's high standards, it is necessary both to use the right materials and to ensure that the air entering the car via the climate system is properly filtered. Volvo has been working for many years now on creating a clean interior climate which is also suitable for people who are particularly sensitive, such as those suffering from asthma and allergies.

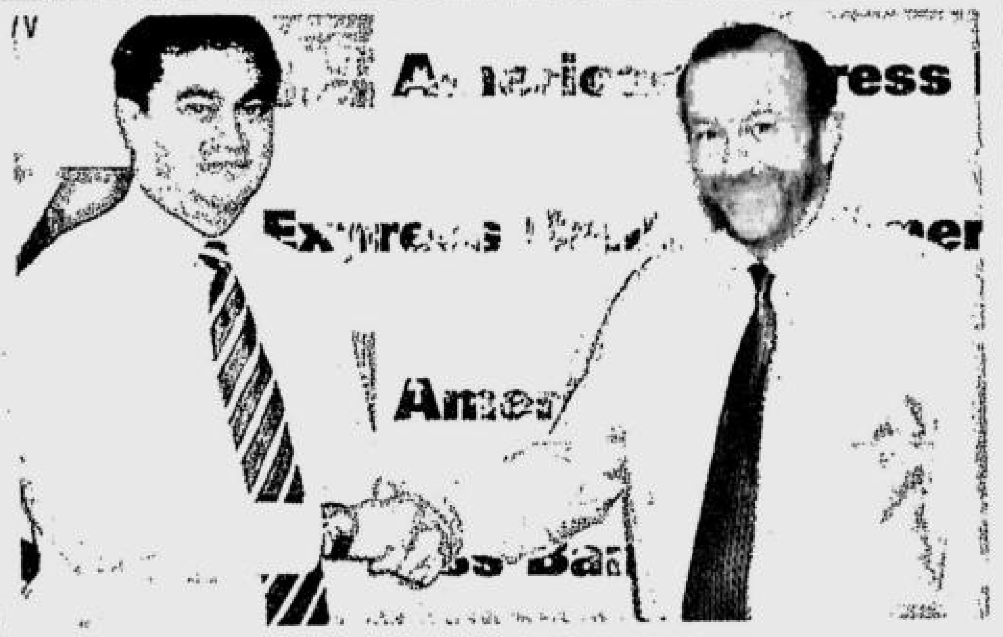
"The textiles and leather used in our cars meet stringent Oeko-Tex standard 100, which ensures that fabrics and hides have been thoroughly tested to check for certain allergy-inducing substances. We also work with contact allergies and are phasing out toxic substances such as certain phthalates. Volvo's IAQS air quality system has also been developed to clean the air and reduce the risk of allergic reactions inside the car," concludes Kärrberg.

The Ecology Center (EC) is an environmental protection organization based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The Ecology Center works to promote a clean and healthy environment, not least through education and the implementation of various projects.

In Manila, Viking Cars Inc. is the official distributor of Volvo cars. The Volvo Makati office, showroom and After-sales Service Center are located at 2272 Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City, while Volvo Ortigas Center is located at 88 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. Volvo Cebu is located on A.S. Fortuna Street, Banilad, Mandaue City.

The 2006 Volvo automobile line includes the compact All-New S40 and V50 Sportswagon, sporty S60, the flagship S80 luxury sedan, the rugged XC70 Cross Country and the award-winning XC90 AWD.

ANDERS Kärrberg, environmental director, Volvo Cars and Volvo XC90 V8



BMW-AMEX TIE-UP

BMW owners who apply for an American Express Peso Platinum Card before March 31 will enjoy a first-year waiver on the card membership fee and earn double Membership Rewards points until the end of the year. The tie-up between the two prestigious brands was formalized by Jose R. Alvarez, Prestige Cars Makati Inc. president, and Ian Fish, American Express Bank Philippines president. In addition, BMW car owners will get 1,000 bonus reward points and a miniature BMW car if they use their American Express Peso Platinum Card within 60 days of approval. They will also earn additional Membership Rewards points for purchases and services at Prestige Cars charged on the card until Dec. 31.

Family fun starts with owning a Ford Everest

FAMILIES AND FORD HAVE ALWAYS been a good combination. For the adventurous family not content with the usual trip to the mall or amusement park, the Ford Everest is the perfect vehicle: hardworking and safe due to its SUV built and quality, yet comfortable enough to provide the space and ambience to meet every family's creature comforts while on the road

This year, Ford starts 2006 with yet another hard-to-beat offer as you can now own a Ford Everest for a low P150,000 down payment through Ford Credit. This offer allows families to stretch their pesos and meet their active lifestyle needs while enjoying the benefits of owning a Ford. The Everest special promo starts in February until March 31 in all Ford dealerships nationwide.

The benefits do not end here. Each Ford Everest purchased during the promo also comes with worry-free ownership. For just P4,500 per month, the owner can avail of comprehensive insurance, a scheduled service plan, extended warranty and 24-hour emergency roadside assistance. All these make owning an Everest even more appealing.

Along with the low down payment, monthly payments of the Everest are set at P23,500 per month for 48 months—a good deal that allows you to keep some extra money for savings or more fun adventures for the whole family.

Unequaled Everest

A comfortable ride, travel ease and maximum safety define the Ford Everest. Add to this the vehicle's rugged styling that makes it stand out in either inner city driving or outdoor escapades.

Providing an optimum level of world-class safety technology, the Ford Everest offers a wide range of features that include dual front airbags, individual seatbelts for all seven passengers, and side-impact beams to protect your family in the event of a side collision.

What's more, the 4x4 XLT has a Limited Slip Differential and 4-wheel Antilock Brake System (ABS) with EBD (Electronic Brakeforce Distribution) that ensures optimum driving and braking control, collapsible steering column that keeps the steering wheel away from the driver upon impact, a cross-braced ladder frame and a four-point reverse sensor.

Functional features

For a ride which you can actually enjoy and without the discomfort of limited space, the Ford Everest has functional features like the "tiered" seating package, bigger legroom and foot space, 50/50 split double folding seat for easy ingress/egress, and dual control air-conditioning system that ensures excellent cooling for front and rear passengers. Likewise, smart interior features add convenience such as individual cupholders, creative storage room and front seat back map pockets equipped with smaller cell phone pockets that make riding the Everest truly enjoyable.

For the Ford Everest, Ford chooses to provide Filipino families with cost–efficient engine technology in the form of a 2.5-liter turbo Intercooled diesel engine, making vehicle acquisition more affordable. The hardworking diesel engine in the Everest is fuel-efficient and capable, and translates to consumers truly having a vehicle that gives them value-for-money.

The Everest also features 110 PS/3,500 rpm for maximum driving power, torque force of 268 NM/2,000 rpm, and a 5-speed manual transmission/4-speed automatic transmission.

Different hues, dealerships

Choose your Ford Everest in any of the following hues: medium blue, black mica, champagne silver and highlight silver.

Check out the Ford Everest in any of the following dealerships. In Metro Manila, Ford dealerships can be found in Alabang, Balintawak, Commonwealth, Edsa, Libis, Makati, Manila, Quezon Avenue and Shaw Boulevard. In the provinces, Ford can be found in Bacolod, Cabanatuan, Cagayan de Oro, Cavite, Cebu, Dagupan, Davao, Iloilo, Pampanga and San Pablo.

Nissan makes global vehicle recall

NISSAN MOTOR CO. LTD. OF JAPAN HAS announced that it is making a worldwide vehicle recall affecting a total of 475,400 units of the Nissan Primera and Nissan X-Trails.

Countries affected by this recall include most markets where the X-Trail is sold, including the major car markets like Japan and Europe. X-Trail units sold in Africa, the Middle East and Asia/Oceania, including Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand are also affected. Only Canada, which introduced the X-Trail last year, is not included in the recall list.

Local recall

In the Philippines, some 4,000 X-Trails are affected by the recall. More than 6,400 X-Trails were sold in the Philippines since its introduction in July 2003. Those produced after January 2005 are not affected by the recall.

The recall is related to the fuel inlet to the gasoline tank called the fuel filler tube, which may rust at the tube-mounting bracket. A pinhole may result from the rust formation, which can cause a fuel leak during full refueling.

However, the formation of rust will take anywhere from 10 to 15 years to develop enough perforation for a pinhole to form, depending on humidity and other factors.

No real cause for panic

"In short, there is no real cause for panic over the short term, since the rust develops between 10 and 15 years. However, Nissan Motor Co. Ltd. has decided to take a very proactive stand toward the issue by making a recall this early."

"We at Nissan Motor Philippines Inc. also decided that in the interest of protecting the welfare of our customers, that we are conducting this campaign," explained Leman Lee, NMPI president and CEO.

"I would like to emphasize that it is the overall safety of all Nissan vehicles that is paramount in this campaign. This is the reason we are engaging in this voluntary recall campaign to inspect and service affected vehicles," Lee continued.

"The cost of this campaign will run into the millions of pesos, but that is something that Nissan is willing to shoulder completely for the peace of mind of our X-Trail buyers," Lee added.

Replacement of part

Starting May this year, Nissan dealers will start replacing free of charge the fuel filler tube with one that has a higher protection against corrosion. This new "countermeasure" part has already been developed.

So far, NML has not received reports of accidents caused by the rusting of the fuel filler tube. However, NML, with its comprehensive safety campaign, wants to assure the welfare of its customers and has made it a policy to act very early on recall issues.

"It is now standard practice for all car manufacturers worldwide to make a recall of certain vehicle models when a potential problem has been identified. In fact, there have been more than a dozen recalls made every year worldwide since 2002 by various carmakers for certain vehicle models," Lee said.

Rigid inspection

The replacement of the affected part will start on mid-April or May and NMPI will use the period from the formal announcement of this recall as a time to do rigid inspection on all X-Trails.

"It only takes about one and a half hour to replace the part but we do not want to inconvenience our customers, so we will start by doing inspections first," explained Rolando Gutierrez, NMPI's After-sales and Service manager. "The campaign will go on until we completely change the parts on all the 4,070 units under the recall."

"Inspection and servicing of the units as well as replacement of the parts will be done free of charge at all authorized Nissan dealers nationwide, Gutierrez said.

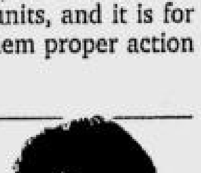
X-Trail owners are encouraged to call NMPI or send their comments or queries to crd@nissan.com.ph or call their dealers for more information on this recall activity.

NMPI also clarified that no other vehicle in its lineup is affected by the recall, particularly all the variants of the Sentra, Cefiro and Serena.

"It is worth noting that our X-Trail customers are very much happy with the quality and performance of their units, and it is for this reason that we owe them proper action on this matter," Lee said.

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza



AIDA Sevilla-Mendoza's column will appear next week.

Car insurance a pain in the ass; Ken odyssey

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

I STILL CAN'T UNDERSTAND why our car insurance companies require motorists to produce the receipt of our license on matters of insurance claims.

That's the law?

If that's not bull, what is?

Gosh, indeed, only in this country where we love to transform an easy thing into a headache.

What's wrong with a valid driver's license not being accompanied by a receipt as proof of its issuance?

I have yet to find another country enforcing such stupidity.

The trouble with our insurance companies is, they love to make things difficult for you if you start processing claims of whatever nature. But when it comes to matters of collecting premiums from you when you renew your insurance contract, they act faster than the wind. Not much requirements. All they need is your check or, much preferably, cash.

There ought to be a law banning the production of the driver license's receipt to make your license truly valid.

We might as well also require receipts of such IDs like SSS, GSIS, Pag-Ibig, ATMs, etc. to make them all valid and, therefore, prove the validity of your identity.

Onli in Pinas, indeed!

* * *

I am glad that Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC), the agency operating the North Luzon Expressway (NLE), is not backing down in its drive to enforce the weight-limit law at the country's premier expressway.

I have to hand it to Ping de Jesus, whose dedication and decisiveness should prove beneficial in the long run for the NLE, whose massive rehabilitation has now been producing huge economic benefits not only to business prospectors in the North but also to motorists like you and me.

The savings we've been realizing for months now since the NLE reopened have helped us tremendously, especially on fuel, tire and time considerations. With travel time at NLE now greatly reduced due to improved surface and widened roads, our mobility makes us more productive as we can still do so much within the day at the end of a trip. In fact, whereas before when we need almost a day of traveling to our destinations up North, today the considerably cut stay on the road even affords us a round-trip on a single day—thus, giving us the luxury of doubling, even tripling, our activities for the day.

It's a boon, too, to us that the weight-limit law is being enforced to the hilt as it also makes for a safe trip to motorists on board lighter vehicles, what with overweight, long trucks not dotting the expressway any longer.

Bravo, Ping! We are behind you because the law is on your side.

* * *

Why it had to happen boggles the imagination.

You invite the media, like what one car company (a new kid on the block) did a while back, and then next you become unfriendly to your guests, what does that make of you?

A hostile host?

Much more than that, I guess.

I was told Vernon B. Sarne of the Manila Times and former ABS-CBN reporter Ira Panganiban were at the receiving end of the host's hostility and, according to Vernon, they've filed charges against their hosts and their bodyguards—if not bouncers?

In this country, even party gatecrashers are treated fairly well. And, certainly, Vernon and Ira did not gate-crash that night.

Oh, well, this case bears watching if only for its sheer oddity.

* * *

I raise a glass to Ken Angeles, my dear buddy from Davao City who owns Yellow Fin, the restaurant that specializes in adobong yellow fin tail, bagaybay and ubul-ubol, to name only a few of the joint's exotic sea food delicacies.

Ken and his fellow Big Bike aficionados went to Manila via the Nautical Highway from Davao, covering more than 1,500 kilometers. Driving a red and white Honda 1,500hp, Ken and his group traveled by land and sea, sleeping five times on hotels in completing their odyssey on wheels that, to him, was "totally exhilarating and thoroughly relaxing to the soul."

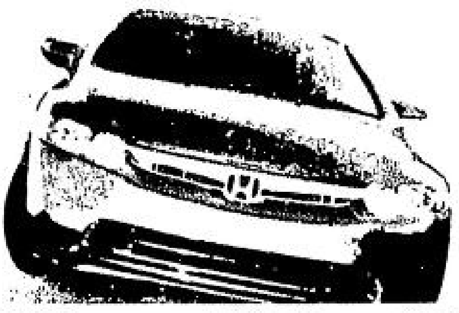
How I wish I could also do that in the near future and experience the joy of breathing mainly nature—Philippine nature, that is.

But first, I need a Harley Davidson. Help, Ken?

* * *

QUOTE ME. You drive or not, buckle up. It's the law.

Civic wins 'Best in Class' vehicle awards



CIVIC Sedan was awarded "Best Economy Car."

HONDA'S QUALITY design and manufacturing, and advanced performance and styling were recognized by the Automobile Journalists Association of Canada (Ajac).

With Honda vehicles claiming the top pick in each of two key categories, Canadians can confidently rely on Ajac's objective evaluation process when selecting the best new economy car and best new sports car.

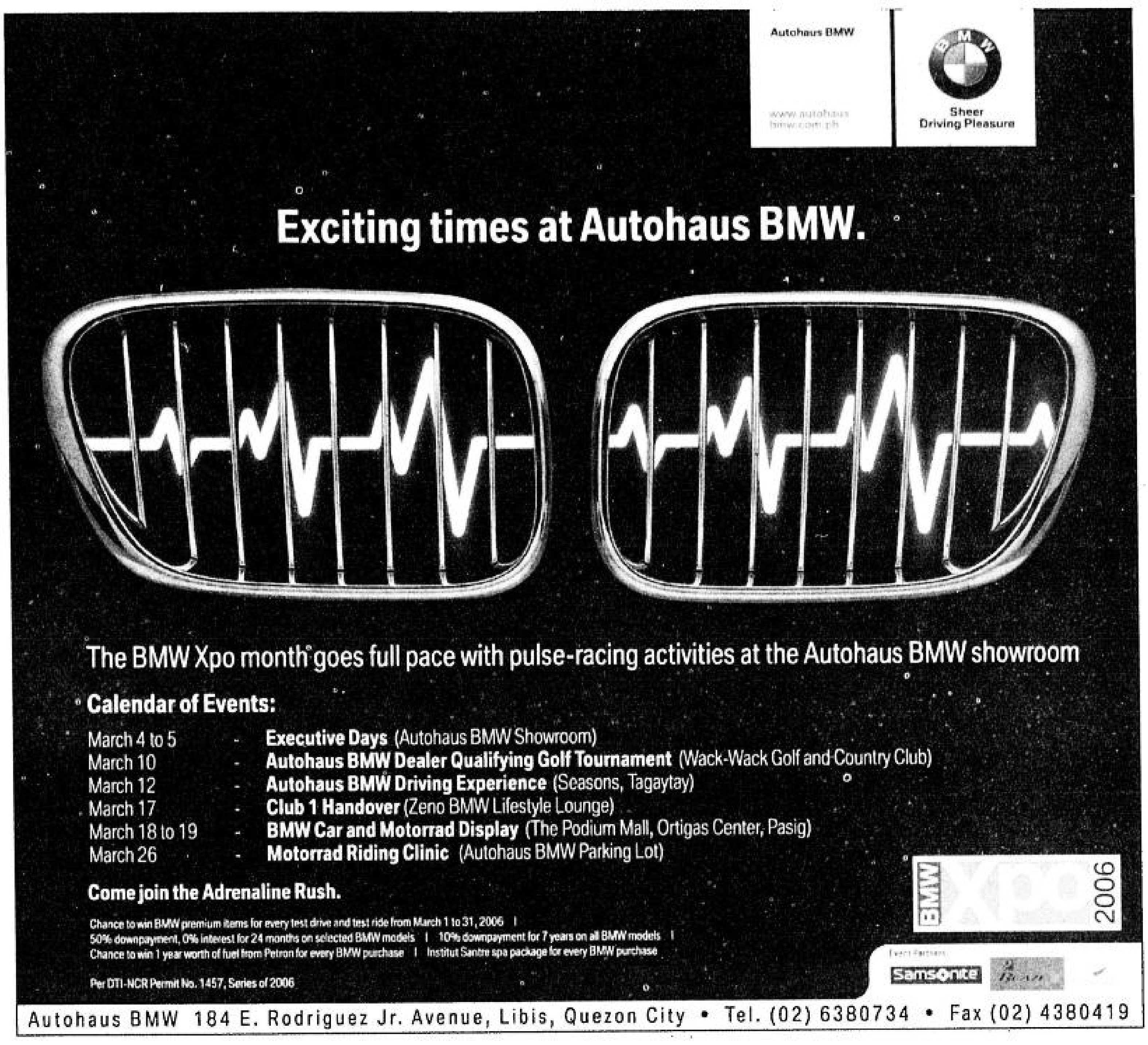
The Honda Civic Sedan won the 2006 Best New Economy Car category in the annual Car and Truck of the Year competition. The new Civic Sedan offers Canadians increased performance with excellent fuel economy, stylistic exterior design, refined interior and class-leading standard safety features.

The Honda Civic, which first went on sale in Canada in 1973, has been Canada's top-selling passenger car for the past seven consecutive years, truly making it "Canada's Car." After just two months on the market, the 2006 Civic sedan and its sister model—Civic Coupé—have resulted in record sales for Civic in both October and November.

Best sports car

The Civic Si Coupé won the 2006 Best New Sports Car. With 197 horsepower, it is designed to showcase the performance of Honda's new global compact platform that implements advanced body construction technologies for enhanced safety, better rigidity, improved ride comfort and a quieter interior.

Civic Si Coupé features a 6-speed manual transmission, limited slip differential, exclusive exterior styling with rear deck wing and aero cladding, and an exclusive interior with deeply bolstered seats, red fabric stitching and unique trim panel.



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March 10	- **Autohaus BMW Dealer Qualifying Golf Tournament** (Wack-Wack Golf and Country Club)
March 12	- **Autohaus BMW Driving Experience** (Seasons, Tagaytay)
March 17	- **Club 1 Handover** (Zeno BMW Lifestyle Lounge)
March 18 to 19	- **BMW Car and Motorrad Display** (The Podium Mall, Ortigas Center, Pasig)
March 26	- **Motorrad Riding Clinic** (Autohaus BMW Parking Lot)

Come join the Adrenaline Rush.

Chance to win BMW premium items for every test drive and test ride from March 1 to 31, 2006 | 50% downpayment, 0% interest for 24 months on selected BMW models | 10% downpayment for 7 years on all BMW models | Chance to win 1 year worth of fuel from Petron for every BMW purchase | Institut Santre spa package for every BMW purchase

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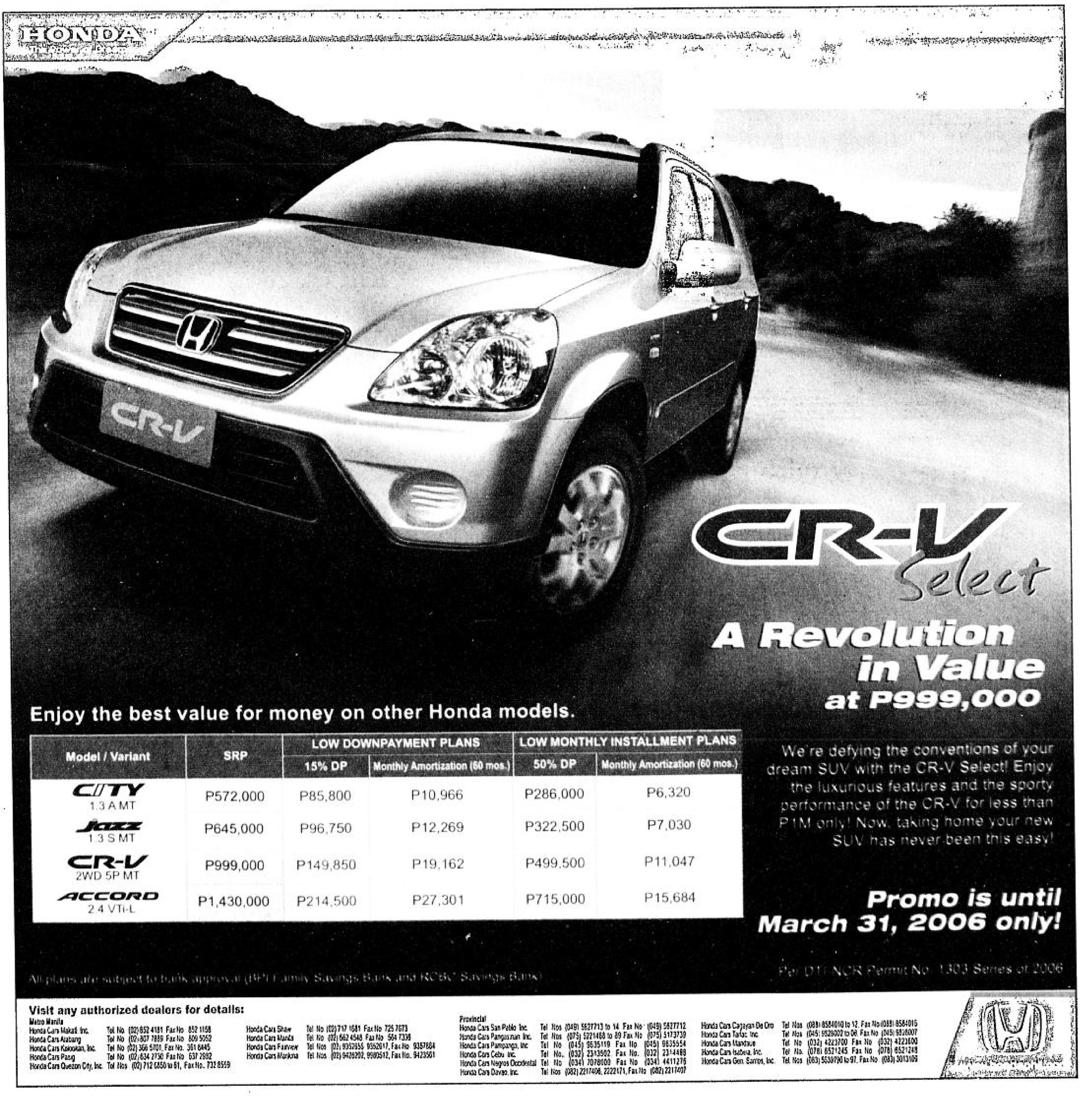

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		15% DP	Monthly Amortization (60 mos.)	50% DP	Monthly Amortization (60 mos.)
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Jazz 1.3 S MT	P645,000	P96,750	P12,269	P322,500	P7,030
CR-V 2WD 5P MT	P999,000	P149,850	P19,162	P499,500	P11,047
ACCORD 2.4 VTi-L	P1,430,000	P214,500	P27,301	P715,000	P15,684

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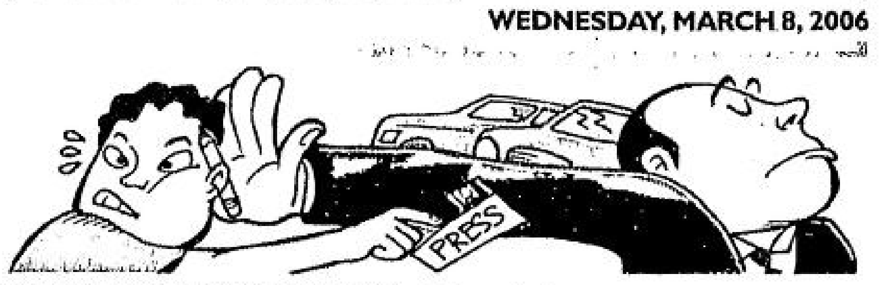
Letter of an editor, manufacturers' backlash



MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE A COLleague in the motoring media will write something worth a direct response. Fewer still are the times when their text seems worthy enough to reprint, so a greater audience may benefit from a read. I picked up a copy of Top Gear Philippines' March issue today and found something worth a long, hard second look. Intrigue is something that is strangely rife, rampant almost, in the small circles of the nation's motoring press, and yet it is plain, unbridled insight that makes the words that will follow below worth understanding and taking to heart.

"There is something magical about watching a Carrera GT blast through the Nurburgring, or seeing a Land Rover effortlessly cutting its own road, or driving a Miata on a twisty one-laner. It is a sublime moment when a vehicle is placed in its element, being driven in the venue and manner envisioned by its makers, precisely fulfilling the purpose for which it was designed. These cars truly belong there.

Compromise

"All great cars seem to share that one common trait: that they are built to belong somewhere. They are all designed with a singular purpose—be it a track master, continent cruiser, off-road monster or whatever else—and as such, compromises had to be made.

"Yet we accept the essential compromise that comes from putting one design consideration above all others because we admire the elegance of a purpose-built vehicle. It would be automotive sacrilege to complain that the Carrera GT should have a more supple suspension or that the Miata should have a powered origami-like folding roof, or that a Land Rover should come in two-wheel drive. Anyone who criticizes a great car for its design compromises should have the words 'I don't get it' permanently tattooed on his forehead.

"As great cars are designed and appreciated for their singularity of purpose, I truly believe that a great car magazine must also be created and judged in the same manner. And for that reason, we at Top Gear have maintained this singular purpose—to deliver an authentic motoring experience with the irreverence, humor, wit and authority that Top Gear is famous for.

Pure in purpose

"The issue shall be my last of 17 exciting issues, all of them not-so-perfect but most definitely pure in purpose. In a volatile billion-peso industry where one model can make a manufacturer and one bad review can spell commercial failure, there is unbelievable pressure placed on those who choose who call the spade, and much to be gained in joining the ranks of the pay-for-praise crowd. Over the past two years, we have driven Top Gear clearly away from the politics and wrangling of industry and media and kept our loyalty focused on our readers. Top Gear is a car enthusiast's magazine and it is with the enthusiast that our loyalty has always lain.

"I am proud to put my name, my integrity and my reputation behind every single word published in this magazine and I am deeply grateful for the overwhelming support you have given Top Gear. Because of your input, responses and feedback, Top Gear has truly become your magazine."

Mike Black,
Editor in chief

Thus closes an era in this beat. The title of the publication does not matter nor does the name of the writer—it is all about what the magazine stood for.

It just doesn't make any sense that, most of the time, your largest advertisers are the companies that you are tasked to rate impartially. In fact, this arrangement is downright unethical. Consumer media has the unenviable task of rating products and responsibly speaking their mind. In the end, any media outfit is also a just business concern like most others—the bottom line is critical.

First victim

Mike is the first victim in the manufacturers' backlash on the new, irreverent, funny, smart and authoritative ilk of journalists that has begun to grace the motoring beat. The emphasis on enthusiast cannot be made any louder, as I am a driver, devotee and consumer before I am a journalist—roles that I would modestly label as skilled and sternly beg to differ with those who would say otherwise.

In my own attempt to raise the candor and relevance of my work, doors have sadly begun to shut. I personally contacted three manufacturers last week to schedule test drives for the middle to end of this month. None have gotten back to me with any sort of concrete answers; yet there are media units available. Even a straight out "no" is better than nary a response at all. Next week the gloves come off, no more mister nice guy.

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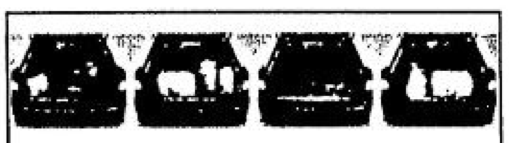


THE NEW CHEVROLET OPTRA WAGON

The Chevrolet Optra Wagon is the latest compact car that boasts features of both a sedan and a station wagon. Styled by the world-famous Italian design house - Pininfarina -the Chevrolet Optra Wagon is built at GM Thailand's world-class manufacturing plant in Rayong. It exudes handsome exteriors, spacious interiors and features a simple, yet classy designed dashboard, and a tilt-adjusting steering column that allows for driving convenience and comfort.

The Optra Wagon offers more space and has features like the roof rail apparatus. Inside, metallic instrument panel trim replaces the sedan's black trim, framing a state of the art 5-in-dash CD player. Equipped with speed-sensitive steering, power assist, and steering wheel mounted stereo control, the Optra Wagon also provides undisturbed driving with sound-absorbent foam, a special noise suppression system and a hydraulic engine mount that absorbs shock and reduces noise when starting, accelerating and braking.

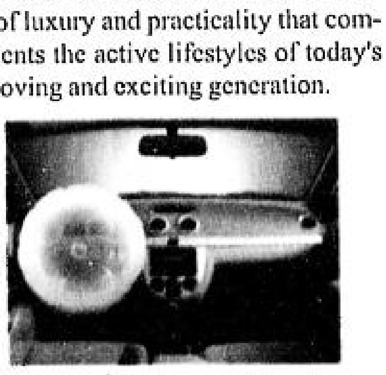
The Optra Wagon has the roomiest interior in its class, including 60-40 split-folding rear seatback for both people and cargo-moving functionality. It is also the first car in its class equipped with a compact cool box conveniently located in a front compartment.

The Optra Wagon is equipped with a 1.6-liter E-Tec II 4-Cylinder DOHC 16-valve engine that generates 110 hp, delivering increased performance and lower fuel consumption. The Chevrolet Optra Wagon has been put through 1.8 million kilometers of durability tests to ensure its performance under real driving conditions

The Optra Wagon has been engineered to provide the quietest possible ride, and features the unique Euro-Ride Tuning Suspension shock-absorbing system, which is specially designed to accommodate load distribution for any road condition. Its 15-inch alloy wheels enhance the Optra Wagon's grip on the road.

The Optra Wagon has received the top safety rating from the American Insurance Association, having been tested in over 190 crash tests to ensure the safest crumple zone. Its safety is ensured through a driver-side air bag, ABS and 4-wheel disc brakes with EBD (Electronic Brake Distribution) system as well as a survival zone.

The 1.6 Chevrolet Optra Wagon is available in 4-speed automatic and 5-speed manual transmission models which offer additional value-added amenities. The result is a fine combination of luxury and practicality that complements the active lifestyles of today's fun-loving and exciting generation.



ADVT

WEDNESDAY,
MARCH 8, 2006
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
C1

LIFESTYLE

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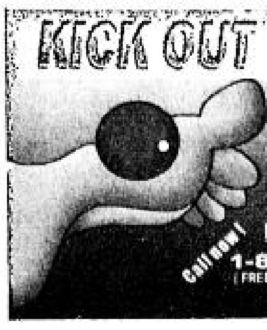
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**
Pam Pastor

KICK OUT GOUT !!!



"Gout is a kind of arthritis specifically caused by too much uric acid in the joints. Uric acid maybe obtained from various dietary sources

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After hours and hours of eliminations (over 2,000 entries—think of it as the e-mail version of 'American Idol') and many a sleepless night, we finally have our Valentine's promo winners

Love is all around

SURE, THEY'LL BE BRINGing home a lot of prizes. But we like to think their biggest prize is still love.

And because we're such romantics, we share their entries here in hopes that they'll help spread a little love in these sad, sad times.

If these stories leave you longing for a big romance of your own, check out our feature on speed dating—the phenomenon might just give you the love story of your life.

Our big prizes consist of gift certificates from Animaland, SM, Cheesecake Etc., Max Brenner, Häagen-Dazs, Shakey's, Bollywood/Café Havana, Dencio's, Solomon Guest House, Sakae Sushi, Metro Phi Bar, Tia Maria's, California Nails and Day Spa.

Also, tickets to Enchanted Kingdom, Casio watches from Time Depot, a dress from Karimadon, Limited Edition 2006 His and Hers Havaianas, perfumes from Ralph Lauren and Cacharel, makeup and skincare products from Shu Uemura, goodie bags from Unilever and six-month subscriptions to PLDT's myDSL.

Winners will also get to enjoy the poolside barbecue at the Hotel Philippine Plaza. And one girl will be taking home an iPod for her beloved.

Terrific prizes all from our good sponsors. And they said nobody believed in love anymore!

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Love, Australian-style

By Annalisa Margarita Mariano
Quezon City

I BELIEVE OUR LOVE STORY IS ONE OF THE most interesting tales you'll ever hear. It's not typical, and what makes it special is that it was unexpected, like a midnight storm in the summer season.

I was part of the Philippine food festival team that was in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia, in October last year. We had days and nights filled with endless buffets, feeding up to 300 people for lunch and dinner service. The team managed to cope with the stress and we began enjoying ourselves, getting into the daily routine that was hotel work.

I distinctly remember Dom the first night we served dinner. We made Camaron Rebosado, and as a food attendant, it was his job to refill the buffet. He kept going back for the stupid prawns every two minutes. I got pissed that it was going so fast, and perhaps too stressed from the dinner service rush, I went out for a breather.

Who else would be there but Dom, with some of the students from our team also taking a break? We were introduced. He was polite and all, but there were no sparks. Nothing at all. Maybe because when I looked at him, all I remembered was how he'd slam the empty platter on the steel counter and shout "Prawns!"

The week passed, and I would regularly see Dominic outside having a cigarette or inside the hotel café setting tables or polishing cutlery. We would smile at each other and he would wink at me, and I would think, "Ha! Prawn guy thinks he's so cute!"

At this point the other students were already teasing me, because they'd caught Dominic staring at me.

Sydney tryst

On our last day in Melbourne, Dominic said goodbye to us with a hug. Out of my good breeding and nice etiquette, I said goodbye and blurted out, "Hey, Dom, if you're not gonna be busy next week, maybe you should fly down to Sydney and spend the weekend with us," not thinking he'd take it seriously.

I mean, come on, it's like the Filipino habit of asking someone to eat with you even if there's no food left.

Dom decided right away to see us in Sydney. It was five days before he actually came (on a Friday), but before that he'd call us three times a day, while also sending me e-mails and cute text messages.

After Dominic spent time with us in Sydney, it was my turn to leave for Manila. He said stuff about coming over in July for my birthday, and that he really cared for me and was so sad I was leaving and he didn't get the chance to know me better. I was sad as well, but I didn't let my emotions get in the way because I didn't want to expect too much and end up getting hurt later on.

After all, isn't this the picture of a classic fling? Filipino girl meets Aussie boy, they spend a few days together, then each goes back and live separate lives.

When I got back to Manila, Dom started calling every day, waking up and adjusting his schedule so we could go online. I went back to Australia on Nov. 2 and he flew over to see me on Nov. 26. In these 24 days, he managed to send me 300 text messages!

He had his birthday here in Manila on Dec. 6. I introduced him to everyone and we had a great time together. He absorbed Pinoy culture fast. The best burger in the whole world for him now is Brothers Burger, the best beer is San Mig Light, and he also knows a bit of Filipino, mostly curse words I taught him. And, of course, the usual *"mahal na mahal kita,"* which he learned by himself by asking other Filipinos back at the Grand Hyatt.

Scared but happy

We are sort of (hell, I'm scared to face it) planning for the future. He's really serious about me. He even had my name tattooed on his arm the second day he was here in Manila. Not Annali, which is the name I usually use, but Analisa Margarita. It's much more special since no one hardly ever calls me that, he said.

I'm scared because I didn't expect any of this to happen, which goes to show that really, love moves in mysterious ways.

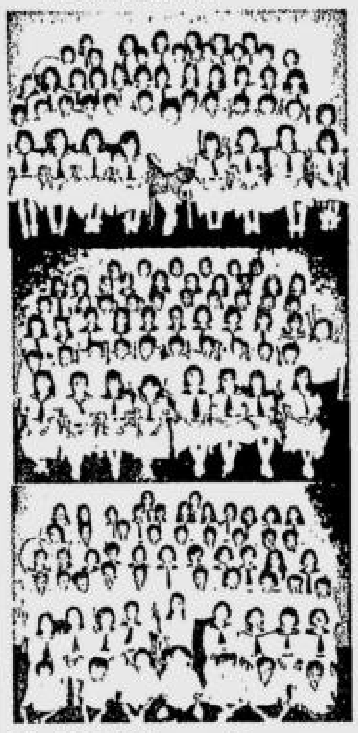
The logical people are totally against our relationship. They say, he's white, you haven't met his family, it's not going to last, blah blah blah. But our romantically inclined friends are absolutely in bliss at the prospect.

Dom is coming over March 1 and will stay until the 19th. I didn't tell him I joined this contest because it would be the best surprise ever. It would make our post-Valentine togetherness really special.

Annali M[illegible] story proves [illegible]

Our love story

1 **JOVEN** and I met when we were in Grade I.

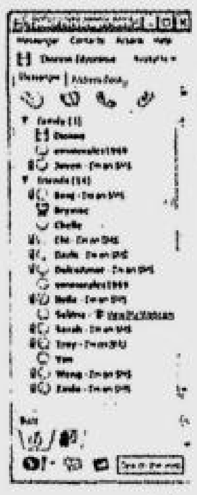


2 **ALMOST** year after year, we were classmates. But looking back, we couldn't remember a single conversation we had.

3 **SOON,** graduation came. We went our own way, continued with our lives, oblivious of each other's existence.

friendster

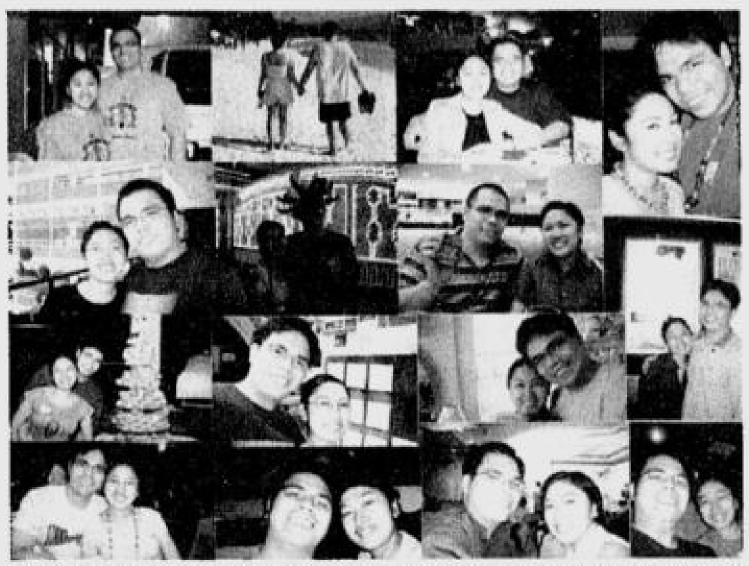
4 **13 YEARS** after elementary graduation... I chanced upon an elementary friend in Friendster. Joven was linked to him. Pretty soon, I was linked to a number of my elementary classmates.



5 **WE** formed our own yahoogroup. Late nights were spent catching up through chats.

6 **A REUNION** was inevitable... On the day of the reunion, he wanted us to meet first. We met on a separate fast-food chain, chatted for a few minutes before deciding to join the rest of the group.

7 **AFTER** the reunion, the chats became more frequent. These chats led to text messages and then to dates.



8 **A DAY** after my birthday... The class president and the teacher's pet officially became an "us." But the story doesn't end there.

9 **A YEAR** later... February 18 changed my life. After arriving from a reunion with our elementary friends. Joven asked me the question, "Brad, will you marry me?" I thought my heart would fail me, because it stopped beating while he was holding my hand. But I managed with, *"Hindi* Brad *pangalan ko 'no."* He then repeated, "Dionne Marga M. Morales, will you marry me?" I didn't need a second question. I looked into the eyes of my future husband and said, "Yes."

10 **WE'RE** getting married on June 10, 2006!
Visit us at:
http://june2006.blogspot.com and http://show.fotogra.ph/dionne-joven

Dionne Morales' tale shows how technology plays a part in romance in these modern days.

From sweet pals to sweethearts

She didn't take his offer the first time. But later, she herself paved the way for him to ask her again

WITH HEARTS' day just around the corner, the cupids are at it again, forming new romances, rekindling old ones or simply keeping the fire alive. For this couple, the cupid's arrow had struck them one too many times. But the arrows, while not missing, just came at the most inopportune of times . . . until now.

Here are excerpts from a conversation with Ken and Cheryl on the story behind their budding romance.

When and where did you meet?

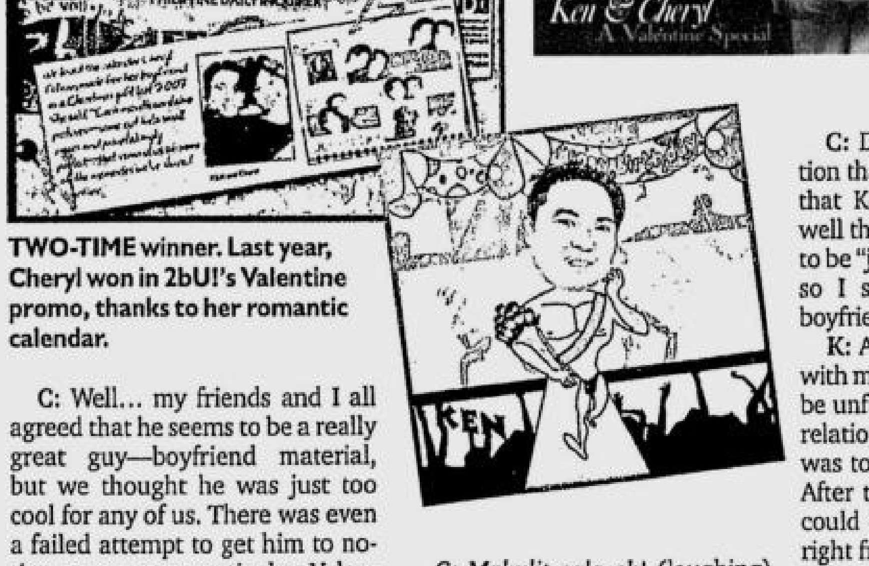
K: We were blockmates since second-year college. We took the same specialization and so shared most of our classes together.

Was it love at first sight? What were your first impressions of each other?

K: No, actually, there wasn't even a tiny bit of spark flying around when I met her. She was kind of the *suplada,* unapproachable type. She went her way and I went mine. Whenever we crossed paths, we'd exchange polite greetings and that was it. There was even a time when I made the effort to smile at her but was just ignored (mocks a doleful look at Cheryl).

C: I wasn't that *suplada!* (playfully punching Ken in the arm) I must not have noticed you that time! Anyway, I've got a much better first impression of you, if you must know. I've always perceived you as a perfect gentleman, (not anymore, kidding, kidding!) although I'm not really sure why. I also thought you and your group were ultra popular and super cool. Oh, and there was one time, I saw your car speeding by and there on the front seat was a life-sized Tweety stuffed toy. I remember thinking, "Wow, he must be a really sweet guy to be giving that to his girlfriend."

So you already liked him then?



TWO-TIME winner. Last year, Cheryl won in 2bU!'s Valentine promo, thanks to her romantic calendar.

C: Well... my friends and I all agreed that he seems to be a really great guy—boyfriend material, but we thought he was just too cool for any of us. There was even a failed attempt to get him to notice us on one particular Valentine's Day (blushes profusely). Oh well, a girl could only wish that it was her picture that he kept in his binder for inspiration instead of Nicole Hernandez's. He had this thing for Nicole then, until now *pa nga yata eh* (laughs). Anyway, so that was all we were.

Just blockmates on a hi-hello basis, huh? How did that change?

K: Tables were turned on our third or fourth year in college. I suddenly started noticing her, cutie *pala.* We continued to share classes together and it was on one fateful subject that she and a close friend of mine became groupmates for a particular project. It came as a blessing for me as I was soon able to ask for her YM (Yahoo Messenger) ID through that friend. Call me crazy but I was slowly falling for her as I got to know her better. Surprises of surprises, she's not at all snobbish and *suplada.* On the contrary, she's very cute and very *makulit.*

All in Good Time
Ken & Cheryl
A Valentine Special

C: *Makulit pala ah!* (laughing) And that was the start of how my otherwise boring college life turned more adventurous and rather exciting (grinning widely).

Adventurous and exciting? How come?

C: Well, I made a sudden change from being invisible to being a bit too visible. To this day, I still wonder what would have happened if, while everyone was still single and free to mingle, we had all gotten to know each other. Anyway, back to the story. I already had a boyfriend when Ken and I started chatting. Although he was excessive in his *pambobolas,* I took it all as part of his comical nature. Besides, he already had a girlfriend then and so I assumed it was all platonic between us. If you'd have heard him or, rather, read his messages about how he gushes over his girlfriend, *naku* you'd agree with me when I say he was soooo in love with her! Who would have thought?

What came of it?

C: Despite the flattering attention that I was getting and the fact that Ken and I got along pretty well through chat, I wanted things to be "just friends" between us and so I still chose to be with my boyfriend.

K: As for me, I had to break up with my girlfriend. I knew it would be unfair for her if I stayed in that relationship. It just wasn't right. It was tough, but it had to be done. After that, my feelings for Cheryl could only grow although I knew right from the start there was never a chance of us being together. It was so hard to see her with another guy. It was especially hard since they were always together in school.

Ouch! I can just imagine! So, were you ever able to explicitly express your feelings toward Cheryl?

K: Yeah. It was a bold, I guess, foolish approach. One night, as if possessed, I drove to her place, called her mobile phone (I must have awakened the whole neighborhood that night 'cause the phone's frequency triggered his brother's car alarm) and asked if she could come down. Thankfully, she said OK. Then and there, in my *pambahay* clothes, unshaven and sweating like a pig, I told her I love her and that despite that, I didn't expect anything from her. I just wanted to let her know how I felt. I left a cute little Pringles pillow for her as a remembrance, which, I later found out, was stashed and forgotten in her brother's car. I guess it was a sign that she really didn't want to have anything to do with me.

That seemed like the end of a chapter. How did the new one begin?

C: After graduation, my boyfriend had to leave for the province. Long-distance relationships weren't for me and so we broke up. Ken and I remained friends though, thanks to text messaging and YM.

Ahh, friends! It all starts with that! I suppose the friendship turned into something more?

K: Eventually, it did turn into something more. I was really happy when we could finally be together. All the waiting, all the pain, all the regrets of being too late, I forgot all of them in an instant. So long as I was with her, everything was fine. It was a bit one-sided though. She wasn't really feeling the same way.

C: I just thought everything happened so fast. It's like I just got off a relationship and, the next thing I know, I'm back in another one. It was such a mess, what with all the guilt and the grief over what had been.

How long before you picked up where you left off? How did it happen?

C: It would be a year later when we finally decide to get back together. It was the day after his birthday. Just the day before, a crazy idea suddenly hit me. I knew just the birthday gift to give! Aside from the novel "Angels and Demons" that I got, I also bought a chocolate mousse cake, his favorite, and some balloons. I set it all up, picnic-style, complete with mats, plates and utensils, on the floor of our study. I then texted him if he could drop by our place so he could pick up my birthday gift for him. When he got there, I met him at the gate, blindfolded him and ushered him into the room where a birthday song was playing in the background. He was so surprised when I took the blindfolds off. Gosh, I so wish I had taken a shot of his face! Anyway, I then asked him to ask the question he had been longing to for a long time. He gave me a confused look in return. When he finally understood what I meant, he asked away.

CREATIVE Cheryl agreed to be Ken's girlfriend in the sweetest way possible.

K: "Will you be my girlfriend?" I asked. She then asked me to open up the cake box for the answer. Inside was a choco mousse cake topped with chocolate-coated bean-like stuff which formed a Y-E-S. I couldn't hide my elation and hugged her so tight. It was, by far, the most wonderful birthday gift I've ever received.

It's sweeter the second time around, huh? What is the most romantic thing that the other has done for you or given to you?

K: Her well-thought of gifts. She's always been a creative genius. I get something specially handcrafted by her for all the special events in the calendar. Every single gift is a reminder of the memories we've shared together.

C: The way he puts up with my idiosyncrasies. He puts up with them far longer than I would have myself. He gives his utmost support in all I do and knows just the right words to comfort me and make me feel better.

So, do we hear wedding bells ringing anytime soon?

C: It's too early to tell. We still have a whole lot of things ahead of us.

K: All in good time. Don't worry; we'll send you an invitation.

A two-time Valentine promo winner, Cheryl Polican once again exercised her creativity by presenting their love story in a magazine format.

THE MEN getting ready before the event.

THE AUTHOR with some of the female participants PHOTOS BY ROBERT DE VILLA

SIX Degrees' Ferdie Ong

Hearts in a hurry

In Speed Dating, three minutes is all it takes to know if you click with a person or not. Prepare to be surprised!

By Nastasha Isobel B. Verayo

THERE'S NO ROOM FOR BEING COY in this dating scene—not when the wooing starts and ends with a shrill blow of the whistle, three to five minutes tops.

What can two strangers possibly talk about in so short a time?

Surprisingly, I will later learn, a lot.

Three minutes is all it takes to know if you click with a person or not, explains Ferdinand Ong of Six Degrees Events Management, the group responsible for bringing Speed Dating into the country. Similarly, if there's no connection, you won't have to be stuck with a bad date the whole night. Plus, you get to go through a whole slew of (hopefully more suitable) prospects without missing a beat.

Bad dates, not-at-all-bad dates and dates so good you'll want to steal the host's whistle and flush it in the toilet. How's that for an interesting evening?

Match point

Here's how it usually works:

Upon arriving, participants are given badges with their respective names and numbers. Armed with pens and scorecards, the ladies take their seats by their corresponding tables while the men make the rounds, one "station" at a time. During their brief chat, each party decides whether they want to know the other person further (by ticking "yes" in their scorecards), or not (by ticking "no").

Matches are determined by a mutual "yes," meaning both the guy and the girl expressed interest in a full date by ticking "yes" beside each other's names in their tally sheets. Then the coordinator gives the attendees the results containing contact information of all their matches.

One particular evening in the Minotti Showroom (2/F, Makati Shangri-La Retail Arcade, Ayala Avenue, Makati), however, things were a wee bit different.

As if consecutive blind dates with 13 men and sharing them with a dozen other women weren't bizarre enough for this dating hermit, there was a twist: the ladies were to be blindfolded!

The theme was "finding your true match," which Criscy Bautista of L'Oreal, the evening's sponsor, said was as difficult as finding the perfect foundation. I could therefore understand why the physical had to take a back seat to real conversation and/or meeting of the souls. But why just the ladies?

"Because if we blindfold the guys, *baka maging* touchy *sila* and they might use their 'blindness' for *tsansing*!" Ong explained.

Hence did the promise of decent fun, the allure of a new experience and the incredibly cozy venue find me, despite protestations, a willing victim.

Yummy names

Enter Amando.

Visions of a bare-chested Fabio entangled in a passionate embrace with some voluptuous dame in robes (a la vulgar paperback romance novels) flooded my mind. I became afraid. Very afraid. Blame my overactive imagination and the darn orange blindfold.

But that was not his real name, he swore. It was a code. All the guys had them because some were in the entertainment business and would be easily recognizable. Now I understood the blindfold.

The other names didn't seem so macho, though, as they were actually shades of L'Oreal's True Match Super Blendable foundation: Rose Sand, Apricot Ivory, Vanilla Ivory, Nude Amber, Golden Beige, R2, N5.

"Honey Sand" sounded particularly yummy being whispered in my ear.

It was amusing to discover that many of us had no idea what we got ourselves into. One of the male participants even joked about how he got there. His organizer friend supposedly blackmailed him into joining: "If you want our account… " he was told. Hmmm, at least I think he was kidding.

Laughfest

In 36 minutes, I learned about this Brazilian martial arts called capoeira; spoke with the supplier of beauty products to the salon I go to; glimpsed an artist's struggle between his work and his passion; was advised to do what I love doing and to go beyond that; listened to how an eight-year romance ended in friendship; and got what suspiciously sounded like a job offer abroad. Not to mention, shared tons and tons of laughter.

One of my favorites, though, was the guy who began shooting his questions even before he was properly seated beside me, with lines that sounded like they were lifted from an autograph book (and I couldn't resist telling him so, amid giggles).

"What's your ideal date?" he prompted.

Was he seriously asking me that? He was.

I have long given up on men who would cook for me, so I told him the next best thing: "An out-of-town date."

As it turned out, his ideal date was cooking dinner for his girl. I nearly melted in my seat.

Lesson learned: Cut these guys some slack. They might just surprise you.

Call Six Degrees Events Management at 0917-8538168.

AT ONE point, the women took off their blindfolds to see their dates (above).

SHORT but sweet talks ROBERT DE VILLA

L'OREAL'S Criscy Bautista speaks with Men's Room's RJ Ledesma about finding true love. ROBERT DE VILLA

Don't stay home this summer.

Check out the TRAVEL AGENCIES classification in the

DPC YELLOW PAGES

SKIN PERFECTION, SYSTEMIZED SOLUTIONS

great white ways!
whitening system
youthfulness you can preserve!
pimple control system
flawlessness you can achieve!
age reducer system

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Hortaleza, M.D. Whitening System

Whitening is not all-in-one. It is a continuous and integrated process that needs ample time to make you fully reap its benefits. That's why serious whitening requires nothing less than a comprehensive skin care system.

Our prescription? Hortaleza, M.D. Whitening System! Gives your skin radiance by day and lightening by night. Used regularly, this system works hard to effectively lighten blemishes and dark spots, while providing protection from the skin-darkening effects of the sun and the environment! So when it comes to skin whitening, go with Hortaleza, M.D. Whitening System!

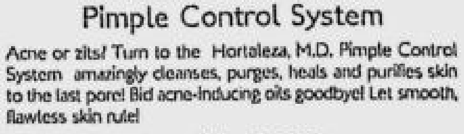
Get a Whitening starter kit for only ₱299*!

Whitening you can swallow!
Hortaleza, M.D. Illuminous Whitening Capsule

Achieving porcelain-white, celebrity complexion and making it last is a process that goes beyond the usual skin-deep solutions. Thanks to the discovery of Glutathione, getting more permanent results has finally become so effortless.

Glutathione is essentially a natural, immunity-boosting tripetide amino acid that is found in the body. Regular intake of Glutathione has been tested and proven for its positive "effect": whitening of dark skin! No wonder, it has been dubbed as the "prescription-of-the-moment" by Hollywood dermatologists, thus earning its stature as one of the most coveted, "to-die-for" beauty arsenals among celebrities, socialites—and practically anyone who can afford it.

However, with the cutting-edge expertise of Hortaleza, M.D., the once-prohibitively priced Glutathione is now made accessible with new Hortaleza, M.D. Illuminous Whitening Capsule! Enjoy the multi-benefits of Glutathione whitening, and anti-ageing, plus Vitamins C and E with Alpha Lipoic Acid. All in one capsule for only ₱39.75 each! That's 53% more affordable than other brands! Get it in packs of 30's and 10's at all HBC Home of Beauty Exclusives Stores nationwide. Now isn't that illuminating news for your skin?



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Hortaleza, M.D.
Age Reducer System

Do you know that 40 is the new 30? Now, more than ever, skin has never been so sexy beyond 40! Youthful skin is here to stay. In an age where every second counts, count on Hortaleza, M.D. Age Reducer System to give ageing skin a second chance. It rejuvenates skin while erasing tell-tale lines completely!

Get an Age Reducer starter kit for only ₱275*!

Flawlessness you can achieve!
Hortaleza, M.D.
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Acne or zits? Turn to the Hortaleza, M.D. Pimple Control System amazingly cleanses, purges, heals and purifies skin to the last pore! Bid acne-inducing oils goodbye! Let smooth, flawless skin rule!

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* Prices subject to change without prior notice.

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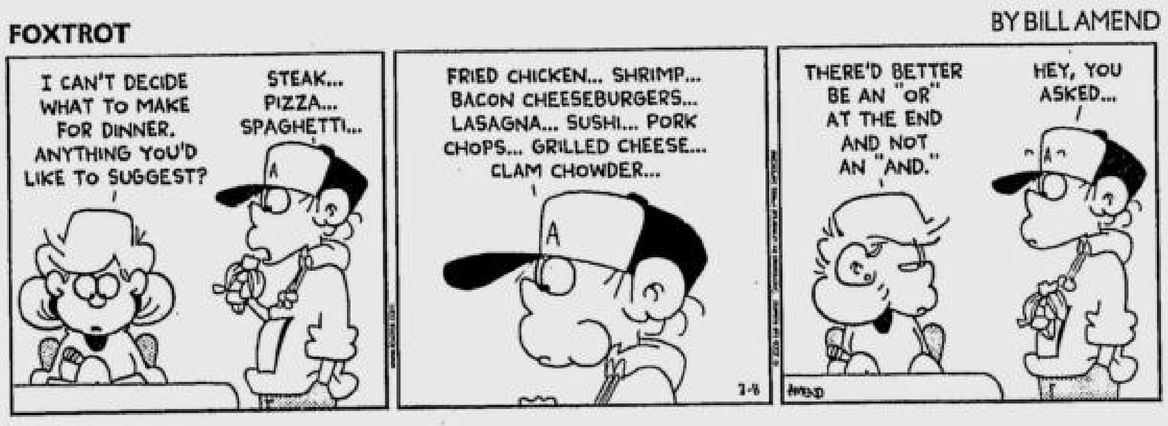
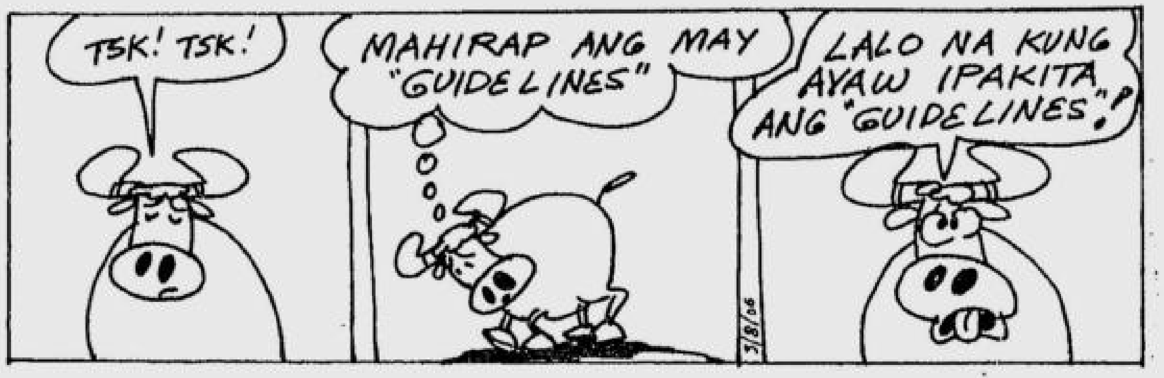
Text FREE FACIAL to 09189215520 to avail of an exclusive free facial service at selected HBC branches nationwide. Present your cell phone with confirmation message from HBC Customer Care. Offer is good from January 20 to A[illegible] 2006.

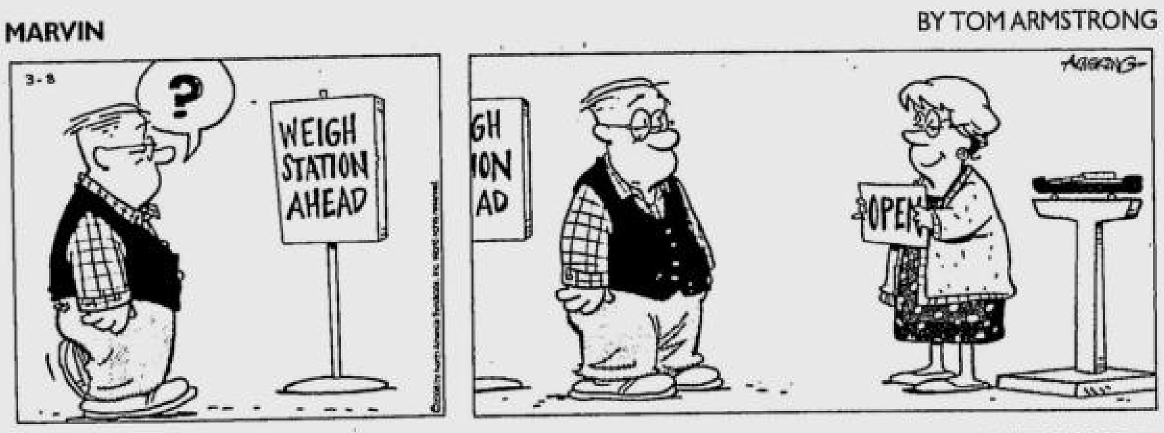
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


I CAN'T DECIDE WHAT TO MAKE FOR DINNER. ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO SUGGEST?
STEAK... PIZZA... SPAGHETTI...
FRIED CHICKEN... SHRIMP... BACON CHEESEBURGERS... LASAGNA... SUSHI... PORK CHOPS... GRILLED CHEESE... CLAM CHOWDER...
THERE'D BETTER BE AN "OR" AT THE END AND NOT AN "AND."
HEY, YOU ASKED...

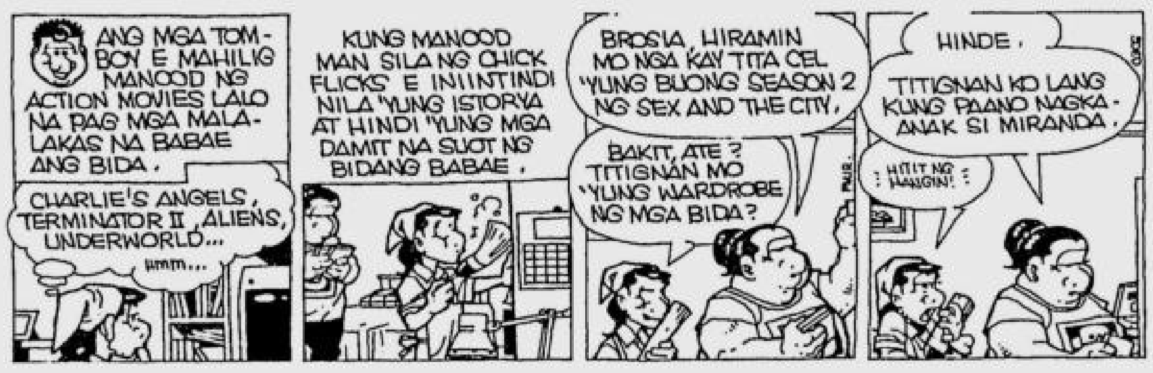
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


TSK! TSK!
MAHIRAP ANG MAY "GUIDELINES"
LALO NA KUNG AYAW IPAKITA ANG "GUIDELINES"!?
3/8/06

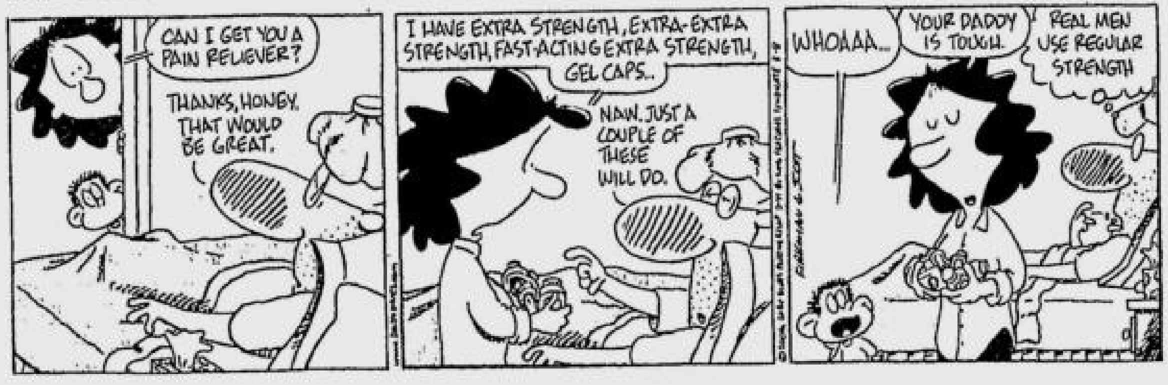
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


3-8
?
WEIGH STATION AHEAD
OPEN

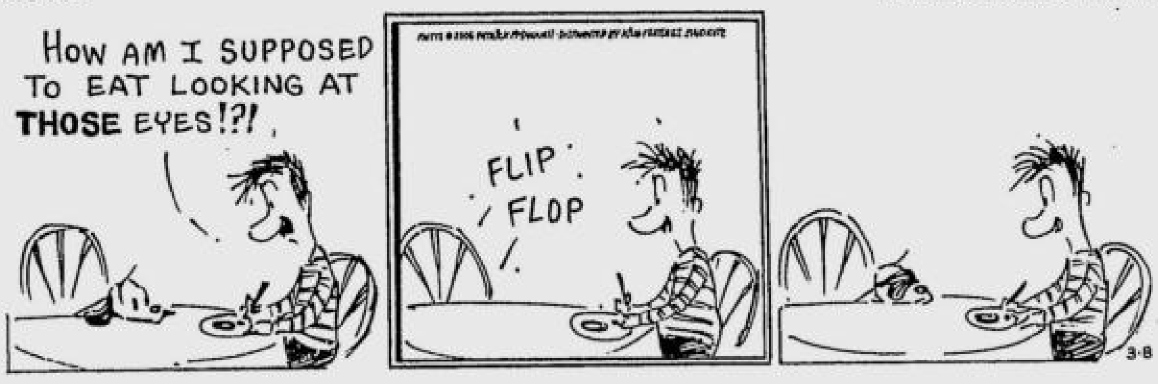
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


ANG MGA TOMBOY E MAHILIG MANOOD NG ACTION MOVIES LALO NA PAG MGA MALALAKAS NA BABAE ANG BIDA.
CHARLIE'S ANGELS, TERMINATOR II, ALIENS, UNDERWORLD... umm...
KUNG MANOOD MAN SILA NG CHICK FLICKS E INIINTINDI NILA 'YUNG ISTORYA AT HINDI 'YUNG MGA DAMIT NA SUOT NG BIDANG BABAE.
BROSIA, HIRAMIN MO NGA KAY TITA CEL 'YUNG BUONG SEASON 2 NG SEX AND THE CITY.
BAKIT, ATE? TITIGNAN MO 'YUNG WARDROBE NG MGA BIDA?
HINDE.
TITIGNAN KO LANG KUNG PAANO NAGKA-ANAK SI MIRANDA.
HITIT NG HANGIN!

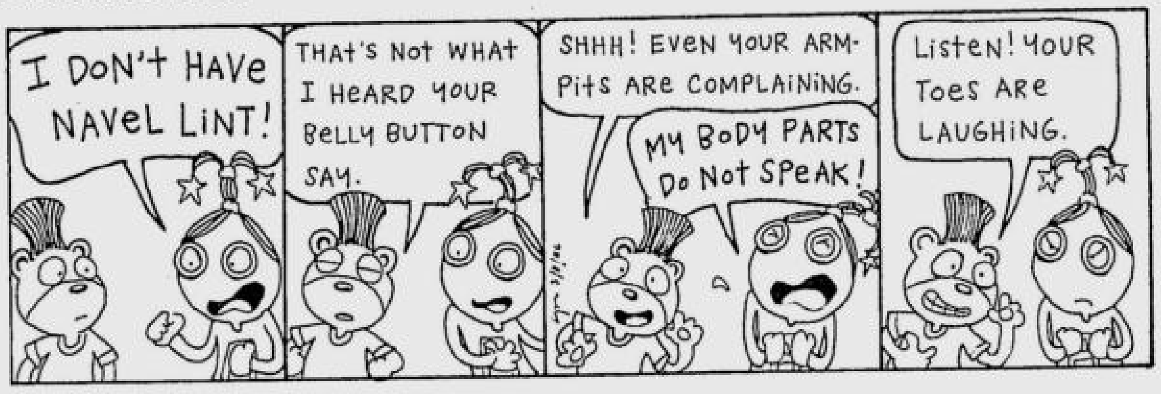
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


CAN I GET YOU A PAIN RELIEVER?
THANKS, HONEY. THAT WOULD BE GREAT.
I HAVE EXTRA STRENGTH, EXTRA-EXTRA STRENGTH, FAST-ACTING EXTRA STRENGTH, GEL CAPS...
NAW. JUST A COUPLE OF THESE WILL DO.
WHOAAA...
YOUR DADDY IS TOUGH.
REAL MEN USE REGULAR STRENGTH

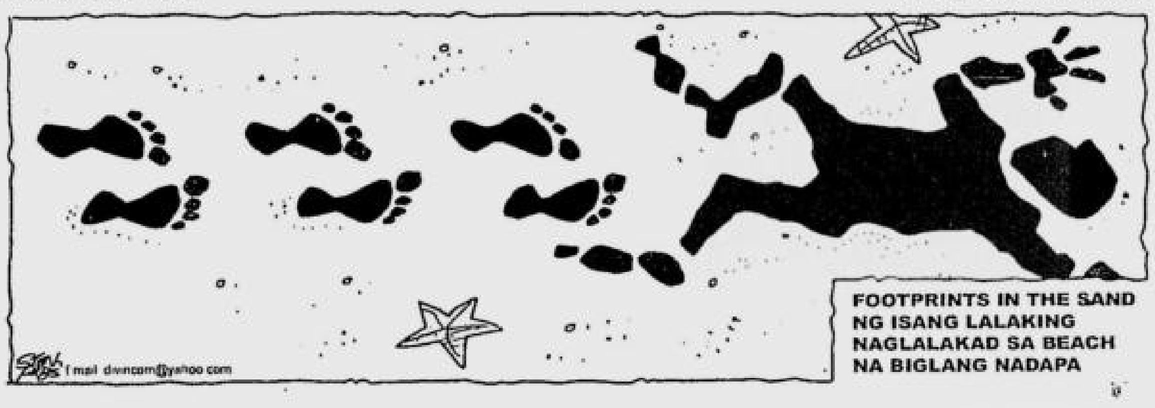
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


How AM I SUPPOSED To EAT LOOKING AT THOSE EYES!?!
FLIP FLOP
3-8

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I DON'T HAVE NAVEL LINT!
THAT'S NOT WHAT I HEARD YOUR BELLY BUTTON SAY.
SHHH! EVEN YOUR ARMPITS ARE COMPLAINING.
MY BODY PARTS DO NOT SPEAK!
LISTEN! YOUR TOES ARE LAUGHING.

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND NG ISANG LALAKING NAGLALAKAD SA BEACH NA BIGLANG NADAPA

E-mail divincom@yahoo.com

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You definitely have a zest for life. You want adventure. You appear to others to be calm, but privately, you're very sensitive and sometimes shy. It's important to learn how to take your power and do what you want. Now is the time, because this year could be one of the best years of your life.

Birthdate of: Lynn Redgrave, actress; Aidan Quinn, actor; Kathy Ireland, model.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Surprise guests or relatives might pop in and visit you today. Something unexpected will happen at home or with a family member. It could please you very much—keep an open mind.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Expect to meet new people today. Unusual little events suddenly cross your path. This is a great day to take up a new hobby or learn something new.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Impulse purchases could pay off today. Little surprises with your cash flow are likely. You might even get an unexpected windfall! (Let's hope so.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): The Moon is in your sign today. This makes you crave emotional excitement. You want something different from your daily routine to happen. It's OK to try something impulsive.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Surprising news connected with the government or large institutions is likely today. You might also encounter some new kind of technology. Just be patient.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Your encounters with friends will definitely hold a few surprises today. Possibly, you'll meet someone unusual. Stay flexible. Quite likely, you'll learn something new!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Your boss might throw you a curveball today. You don't have to catch it, but you had better see it coming. If you're not sure how to respond, do nothing.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): People's opinions about religion or politics shock you today. Travel plans might take a sudden shift. Matters connected with publishing and the media are surprising.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You might buy something new and very high-tech for your home today. It could be related to computers or your home-entertainment system. It might even be a new cell phone.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Stay light on your feet today, because anything could happen. Your daily routine will definitely change. Be ready for the unexpected, and allow extra time for everything.

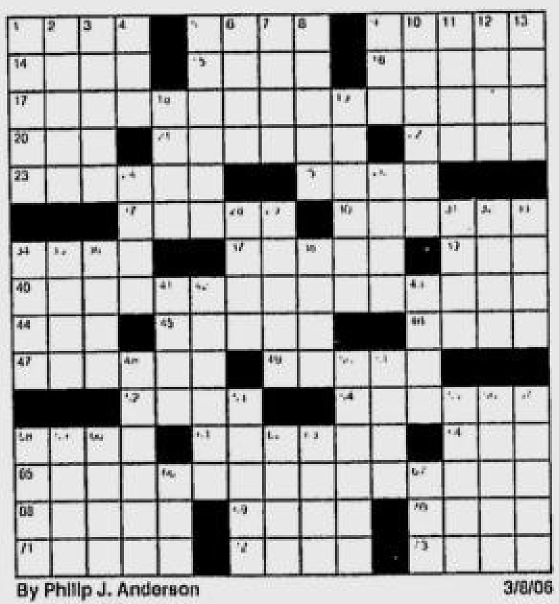
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): New ways to make money could occur to you today. Perhaps an unexpected job offer suddenly appears. Your window of opportunity is brief, so you will have to act quickly.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Unexpected flirtations or romantic adventures will thrill you today! You feel impulsive and ready for something new. Life is exciting! You might want to dress differently or wear something unusual. If so, fine; do it!

DAILY CROSSWORD

THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

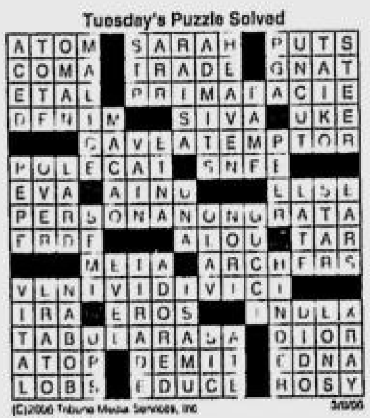

By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

3/8/06

ACROSS
1 Poland's Walesa
5 Minute power source?
9 Lab dish
14 Moises of baseball
15 Stow cargo
16 Slammin' Sammy
17 Hexes
20 Compass dir.
21 Add bubbles
22 Words of understanding
23 Agitate anew
25 Mach 2 breakers
27 Infamous '50s flop
30 Formal appellations
34 Reach across
37 1986 Indy winner
39 Words at the altar
40 Hexes
44 News agcy.
45 Playful water mammal
46 Pianist Hess
47 Team pet
49 Car buyer's option
52 Coup d'__
54 Part of TLC
58 Anna of "Nana"
61 Pure and virtuous
64 Smeltery supply
65 Hexes
68 Peeve
69 Letter opener?
70 Alan of "The West Wing"
71 Rips
72 States further
73 Ring out

DOWN
1 Stout relative
2 Beethoven dedicatee
3 Small bays
4 Shade
5 Takes in, or lets out
6 Asian goat
7 Theatres in old Rome
8 Track events
9 Tire gauge abbr
10 Sign up
11 Golf gadgets
12 Madcap Martha
13 French notion
18 Egyptian port
19 Chaste
24 Hiker's shelter
26 Money drawer
28 Once, once
29 Boutonniere site
31 Roman historian
32 German river
33 Marsh bird
34 Smeltery refuse
35 Haydn's sobriquet
36 Clearance sale warning
38 __ and now
41 Flue problem
42 Affix
43 Portent
48 Examine and expurgate
50 Rose petal essences
51 Appear (to be)
53 Actress Bara
55 Sherlock Holmes' creator
56 Wear away
57 Kidney-related
58 Minor argument
59 Melody
60 Sicilian volcano
62 Stupefied
63 Roe source
66 Hardin and Cobb
67 Chart

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved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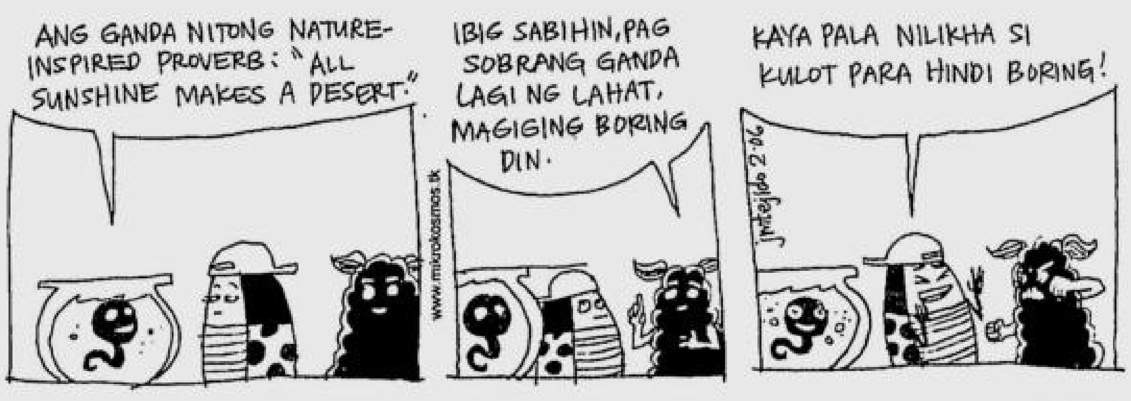
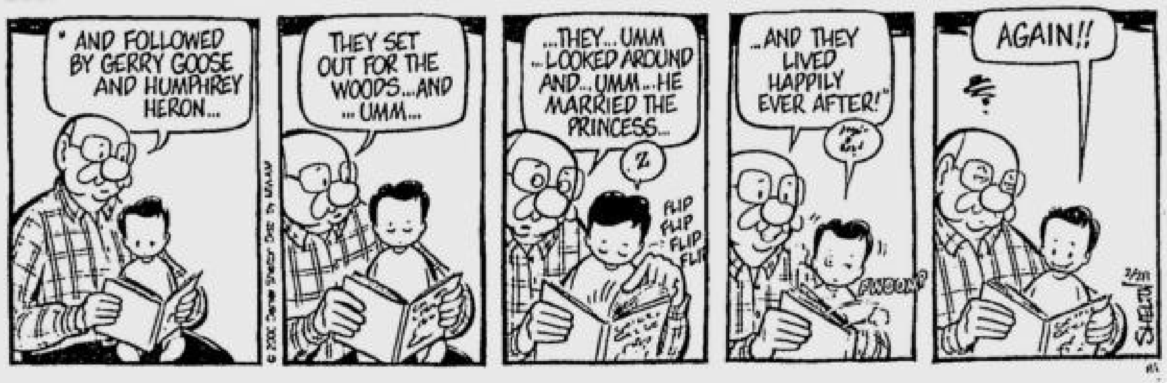
3/8/06

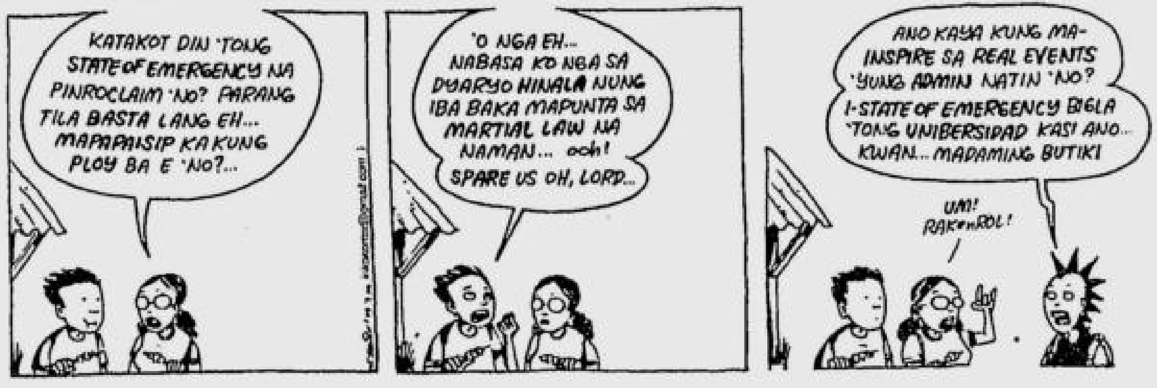
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ANG GANDA NITONG NATURE-INSPIRED PROVERB: "ALL SUNSHINE MAKES A DESERT."
IBIG SABIHIN, PAG SOBRANG GANDA LAGI NG LAHAT, MAGIGING BORING DIN.
KAYA PALA NILIKHA SI KULOT PARA HINDI BORING!
www.mikrokosmos.tk

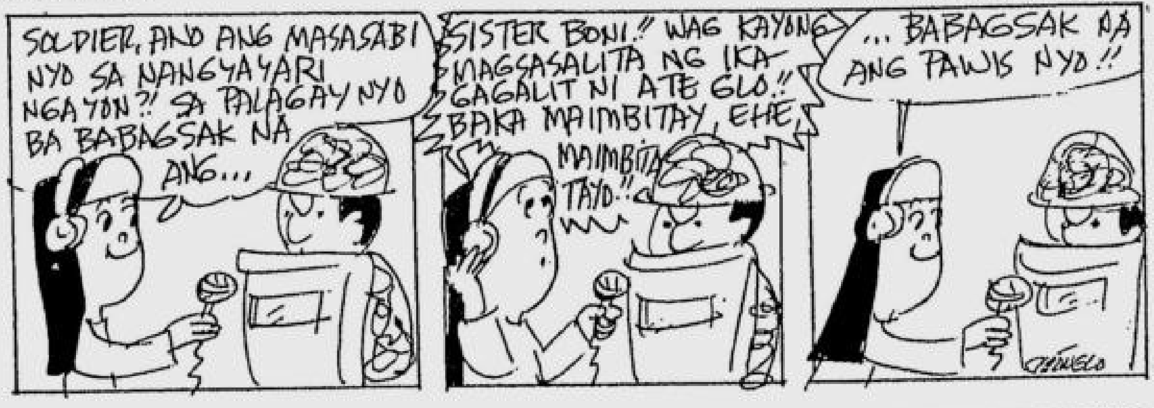
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


"AND FOLLOWED BY GERRY GOOSE AND HUMPHREY HERON...
THEY SET OUT FOR THE WOODS...AND ...UMM...
...THEY...UMM ...LOOKED AROUND AND...UMM...HE MARRIED THE PRINCESS...
Z
FLIP FLIP FLIP FLIP
...AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER!"
AGAIN!!
SHELTON

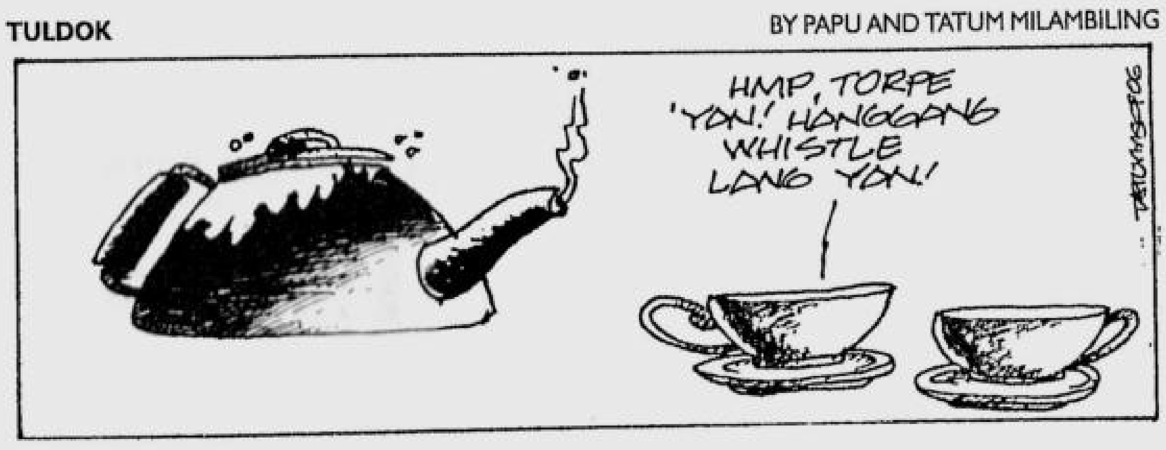
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


KATAKOT DIN 'TONG STATE OF EMERGENCY NA PINROCLAIM 'NO? PARANG TILA BASTA LANG EH... MAPAPAISIP KA KUNG PLOY BA E 'NO?...
'O NGA EH... NABASA KO NGA SA DYARYO HINALA NUNG IBA BAKA MAPUNTA SA MARTIAL LAW NA NAMAN... ooh! SPARE US OH, LORD...
ANO KAYA KUNG MA-INSPIRE SA REAL EVENTS 'YUNG ADMIN NATIN 'NO? I-STATE OF EMERGENCY BIGLA 'TONG UNIBERSIDAD KASI ANO... KWAN... MADAMING BUTIKI
UM! RAK*N*ROL!

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SOLDIER, ANO ANG MASASABI NYO SA NANGYAYARI NGAYON?! SA PALAGAY NYO BA BABAGSAK NA ANG...
SISTER BONI!! WAG KAYONG MAGSASALITA NG IKAGAGALIT NI ATE GLO!! BAKA MAIMBITAY, EHE.
MAIMBITA TAYO!!
... BABAGSAK NA ANG PAWIS NYO!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


HMP, TORPE 'YON! HANGGANG WHISTLE LANG YON!
TATUM3806

SONY DSC-R1

More than a point-and-shoot digicam

By Gabriel H. Mercado
2bU! Contributor

SONY
Carl Zeiss
Vario-Sonnar

REASON NO. 1: After reviewing gadgets for a while, you will see where a manufacturer is going. Some brands are conservative, others preach durability, others are keen on price. With that, some business sense, and an eye on world prices of such things as memory chips, storage and others that all gadgets rely on, you pretty much have an idea where a brand is going with its products for the year.

From my own and many others' knowledge of Sony, however, the 10.3-megapixel DSC-R1 came out of nowhere, and with its most recent predecessor, the DSC-F828, hailing all the way from 2003. No one expected anything like this from the mostly point-and-shoot digicam maker.

Reason No. 2: At 10.3 megapixels, the DSC-R1 is Sony's latest entry into the professional and "prosumer" (for "professional consumer") digital SLR market, and much as I loathe using jargon, prosumers are your ordinary camera buyers who have the moolah to buy what the professionals use, which is a camera that can do more than take family pictures, and then use it for taking family pictures. It's like the rationale behind buying four-wheel drive autos and staying in the city.

The prosumer will take it out for a spin once in a while, taking terrific shots in maximum resolution and at the highest pixels available, but for the most part doesn't have the time because he's too busy working to afford such things.

At any rate the DSC-R1 is just perfect for this demographic, with high-end specifications that leave no doubt to what it can do, is manufactured by a solid brand, and is designed in such a way as to make it instantly recognizable from afar. After all, what's the point if it doesn't impress the guys at the office? Which leads to the next point.

Unique

Reason No. 3: Just look at it. The L-shaped DSC-R1 is unique, and there have only been five or so models from Sony in the past seven years that have used this one-of-a-kind form factor. An exclusively right-handed design, you'll rely on a gun-like grip on the right stubby portion (and similarly enough, the battery is stored underneath the grip like a magazine), to handle its hefty 2.2-lb. weight.

> The biggest point for this camera would have to be the results

You can still use a standard SLR pose when taking shots, with your left palm up and fingers wrapped around the humongous nonremovable Carl Zeiss, 5x optical zoom 24-120-mm lens, right second finger ready on the "trigger" and the seven-level ISO button (including auto). Your right thumb will be active, too, ready to pounce on the AE exposure lock, the display-mode button for quick review of shots you've taken, and a joystick for moving around the display to fix the seemingly infinitesimal number of settings, many of which occasionally require a ponderous review of the user manual—something I'm entirely not used to when reviewing something from Sony.

Which is not to say that the DSC-R1 is too difficult to use, which at this point is a timely subject to segue into the next reason.

Performance

Reason No. 4: I'll come straight out and say that the Sony DSC-R1 is the best camera I've ever used, within the parameters I've mentioned above. There will be those who will belabor the fact that you can't change lenses, and I will argue that for the most part, SLR prosumers don't change lenses all the time to begin with, and even professionals use different cameras for different purposes as needed.

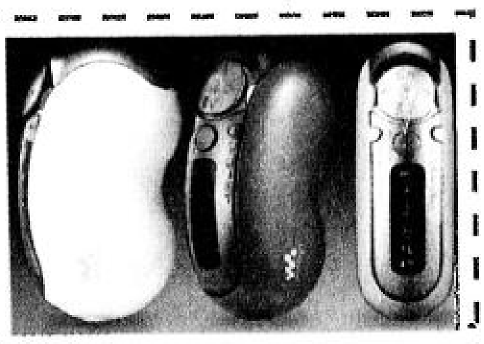
There will be critics of the top-mounted LCD screen, and I will argue that this is a terrific improvement on the alternative, "pasted" on the back LCD design. While this may take getting used to, this allows unique perspectives in the strangest of situations where you have to take a shot with it above your head, level to the ground or around corners.

Some might even argue this is not a "true" SLR as it doesn't have a prism or mirror box reflecting the image to the LCD "viewfinder," and that would be true, but at the same time, it offers a reduction in space, the lens is closer to the sensor and the display to the LCD viewfinder is not a preview at all, but a real-time display of your subject.

Finally point-and-shoot digicam owners might take notice that the DSC-R1 doesn't do movies, at which point you'd have to realize anyone who can afford a DSC-R1, approximately priced at P55,000, can certainly afford a decent camcorder for that purpose, and besides, no decent prosumer would be caught using it for such.

But finally, the biggest point for the Sony DSC-R1 would have to be the results. We can argue until we turn blue, but the shots I've taken with the DSC-R1 are so good it makes me look like I know what I'm doing, and that closed the sale right there as far as I'm concerned.

Sure, there are other great cameras, some better or worse at this or that, but when it comes down to it, I'll take my chances with the DSC-R1 for that one reason alone.



Win a Sony Walkman Bean!

2BU! AND SONY WANT YOU TO ENJOY your own Sony experience with the all-new Sony Walkman Bean.

The innovative Sony Network Walkman E300 series, the new line of flash memory-based mp3 players from Sony, features ATRAC3plus and mp3 playback, plus a built-in FM tuner.

It also comes bundled with SonicStage 3.2 music management software. The Walkman Bean comes in a shape reminiscent of jellybeans. It's available in four yummy colors: Tropical Ice (Blue), Cotton Candy (Pink), Licorice (Black) and Coconut (White).

Although you can buy your own Walkman Bean from your favorite Sony Squares in Gateway, Park Square, or SM Megamall (call 8787600, e-mail info.sph@ap.sony.com, or visit www.sony.com.ph), we are giving away a Sony Walkman Bean to a lucky 2bU! reader.

Just tell us why you think you deserve the unit in the most creative way possible. E-mail your entries to contest2bu@inquirer.com.ph. Don't forget to include your name, age, address, school/office and contact info.

CLEANING the Philippines—literally.

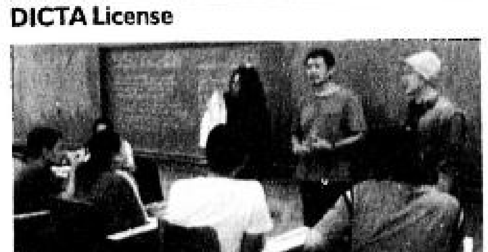
PHOTOS BY TIM YAP

A different kind of makeover

> Artists really have a different way of thinking—we should listen to them more

DIETHER on stage

DICTA License



INVITING students to participate

DAKILA
No More Excuses Philippines!

DAKILA'S mural

Tim Yap

RIGHT AFTER MY BLONDE BRO **Rustom Padilla** came out before the whole nation and "Brokeback Mountain" nearly swept the awards season, it is quite surprising to find out that the "Queer Eye" guys are not coming to the country anymore. They were scheduled to fly in here for the Ayala Malls this coming weekend of March 10-11.

I heard from a super source that they (or their handlers) got scared when they saw our situation on the news. They won't be so sassy doing makeovers to rallyists because the people marching on the streets don't care about their looks anyway.

A makeover of the way people think and act—anisogametic, and not aesthetic (although that's good, too)—that's what we need.

Emergency state or not, everything seems to be going as planned. Just to be feng shui. sure in this Year of the Dog, I went to the yearly blessing of young feng shui expert, **Princess Lim Fernandez**, last Sunday at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. She led me to a room where Master **Joseph Chau** presided over a ceremony that was supposed to safeguard your year. I should have brought with me a map of the Philippines. I felt like Uma Thurman in "Kill Bill 2" while my master was giving me the secrets of the universe.

Speaking of maps, I wrote about this organization called Dakila Ka, Pilipinas, earlier this year. They are a group of young artists and *artistas* whose main thrust is to enliven youth activism by being pro-Filipino and by making a statement without resorting to anything violent and disruptive.

Headed by comic actor and underground filmmaker **Tado** and artist **Lourd de Veyra** of Radioactive Sago Project, Dakila mobilized close to a thousand believers in their cause—their cause being the cleanup of the Philippines.

Clean up the map

They're not queer, but they spearheaded the "cleanup" of the Philippine map on Luneta. Yup, that part of Rizal Park where the relief map of the Philippines is located—a dirty one at that. These forward-thinking Filipino movers put their paint brushes and cleaning tools together and led the cleanup of the Philippines—literally.

In doing so, these artists have instilled an urgency to act on issues that face our nation. Other artists that participated in the cleanup were **Buwi Meneses** of Parokya ni Edgar, **Ronnie Lazaro, Cooky Chua, Noel Cabangon**, Updharmadown, Dicta License, Blow (**Diether Ocampo**'s band), Makatha (**Epy Quizon**'s band), **Nathan Azarcon** of Bamboo, and many more artists who have linked up in order to make things better for *da Pilipins*.

There were also volunteers who came from AAP (Artists Association of the Philippines), ROCK-ED, PWU, UP, DLSU, Letran, TUP, Tuklas Sining, Museo Pambata and many more.

Really now, we're sick of rallying on the streets led by people we don't trust. Sometimes, the little things have a louder voice in terms of message delivered, or in the case of our Google and text generation, sent.

Take the murals on the Freedom Wall of the UP College of Fine Arts. "Never again to Martial Law," it says, in-your-face, and in our flag's bold colors. Now, you don't need a rally permit to get your message across. Artists really have a different way of thinking—we should listen to them more, I think.

Vote for your favorite artist!

Now on a regional scale, the favorite artists for Team Philippines for this year's MTV Asia Awards have been selected. You have a choice between Bamboo, Hale, **Kitchie Nadal**, Orange and Lemons, and Rivermaya. The awards will be held in Bangkok this May 6.

Will Rivermaya score a second year win? Or will Bamboo now take the cake? You'll never know—Orange and Lemons, Kitchie and Hale all have their respective following, so they might just pull the rug from these two front runners. As they say in this biz, "it's really up to the fans."

Casting of votes for our favorites has started since March 1 through various ways including voting on the official website (www.mtvasiaawards.com) or via text. Since now is not the time to vote for the politicians (Which one? Who?) of our choice, let us focus our load on voting for our fave local artists at this annual awards that intend to bring young people together via music. Methinks it's a better cause.

If life were just a weekly reality show, so many people would have been voted off already. But it's not. So we just have to do our best to be vigilant and, at the same time, creative with the way we express our opinions. It is our future at stake.

MPH goes widescreen

MPH, THE MOST VISIBLE HOMEGROWN MAGAZINE ON MOBILE technology, goes widescreen this March!

With the influx of portable video systems, the guys at mph have decided to tilt their heads sideways for the very first widescreen issue in the country.

To celebrate this blockbuster hit, mph invited Pia Guanio to grace this issue's cover and to talk about her hectic celebrity life. This issue also contains an inside look at digital video with the production team of the award-winning movie "Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros," as well as an afternoon with Christian Bautista singing to his plants and recording his own music.

On the gadget side, mph also reviews the new video-capable iPod, O2 Xda Atom, Nokia 7370 and Next Base Tablet DVD player. With portable video becoming the next domino-effect in the tech scene, there's also a roundup of the smallest portable video players available in the market.

mph, which stands for Mobile Philippines, is a monthly publication geared towards the Filipino who is always on the go. Faithful readers have always described mph as the most informative, witty and engaging read among all technology magazines because of its eclectic mix of writers and industry mavens.

mph is available at all newsstands and technology hubs for just P80 per issue.

The King-sized Widescreen Issue!
mph goes all horizontal on you
mph
TECH TO GO
FREE
How to make your own videocast
Tech Talk
Movie Media
10
4
Behind the making of Ang Padadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros
The March Video Special
Fashionable and Famous Geeks and Geekettes
P80

Pc Magazine focuses on digital storage

YOUR DIGITAL PHOTOS, MP3 FILES, OFFICE DOCUMENTS AND financial records may not be as safe as you think.

Find out the best ways to store your digital data with PC Magazine's first-quarter special issue, The Essential Guide to Digital Storage.

This special issue focuses on everything you need to know about digital storage devices, from PC hard drives to portable memory. Learn about the history of storage as well as its latest technologies, including Blu-ray and HD-DVD. Know how you can recover data from a crashed hard drive. And learn about the different high-speed storage interfaces that are currently available.

SPECIAL ISSUE!
P100
PC MAGAZINE PHILIPPINES
The Essential Guide to
DIGITAL STORAGE
Best Back-up Practices
From IDE to SATA Explained
Plus Cool Digital Camera Projects

This issue of PC Magazine also contains regular features such as reviews of the latest technology products, solutions to common computer problems, and columns from technology opinion-leaders, including John C. Dvorak and Bill Machrone.

PC Magazine is the most recognized technology magazine in the world. Available monthly, it features both local and foreign content to suit the needs of local information technology enthusiasts.

'Queer' visit delayed

AYALA MALLS ANNOUNCES THAT THE MANILA visit of the international TV group Fab 5, hosts of the show, "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," this Friday, March 10, has been postponed to May.

THE YEAR'S GRAND BLOCKBUSTER TEXT RELOAD!

BIGTIME RELOAD

P100
IDD Top 10
sun
P50 7 days
24/7 TEXT UNLIMITED
P150 30 days
24/7 TEXT UNLIMITED
P20
P100 7 days
P350 30 days
P100 12 days
DAYLITE CALL & TEXT UNLIMITED
sun XPRESS load

GET 100 FREE TEXTS WHEN YOU RELOAD!

Enjoy 100 FREE texts for every P400 worth of load accumulated within one promo month!
Experience FREE bigtime texting to your friends on Sun and other networks! Go ahead, LOAD MORE and GET MORE!

MECHANICS:

1. Every P400 accumulated load that a subscriber makes within a promo month entitles him to 100 Free Texts, which may be used for both Sun-to-Sun and Sun-to-other-networks texts.
   - For example, P400 accumulated load in March will give you 100 Free Texts and P800 accumulated load in March will give you 200 Free Texts.
2. Promo months are: March 1-31, April 1-30 and May 1-31, 2006. Reloads made within a promo month will not be carried over to the next promo month.
   - Reloads in March cannot be counted in April.
   - Reloads in April cannot be counted in May.
3. Subscribers can accumulate the P400 reload from any combination of Regular Call Cards, Xpress load, 24/7 Call & Text Unlimited, 24/7 Text Unlimited, 24/7 Text Unlimited Lite, Daylite Call and Text Unlimited, IDD Top 10 call cards and Regular e-PINs only.
4. Load purchased via SMS, Convert-a-Load and monthly deposits from SureLoad Subscriptions are disqualified from this promotion.
5. The subscriber will receive a text message with a 14-digit number string not later than 4 days after accumulating P400 reload. The 14-digit number string will expire if not loaded within the defined period. The 100 Free Texts is valid for 30 days from the day it is loaded.
6. The 100 Free Texts is cumulative but not the validity period. The longer validity shall apply.

Unlimited Services apply to local Sun-to-Sun calls and texts.

See posters for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0953 Series of 2006.

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